ΑΥΤΑΡΚΕΙΑ,

OR THE

ART

OF DIVINE

CONTENTMENT.

BY

THOMAS WATSON Pastour of *Stephens Walbrook*, LOND.

The Fifteenth Edition.

Godliness with Contentment is great Gain, 1 Tim. 6, 6.

Κέρδος φέρειν χρὴ θνητὸν ὄντα συμφορᾶς. Eurip.
Beatus est qui suis contentus est. Seneca.

LONDON, Printed by *Tho. James* for *Arthur Bettesworth* at the *Red Lyon* on *London-Bridge*. 1653

The year that Cromwell [illegible]

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THE EPISTLE TO THE Reader.

Christian Reader,

HAving seriously considered the great Dishonours done to Almighty God, (as well as the Prejudice which doth accrue to our selves) by the Sin of Discontent, (a Catholick and Epidemical Sin) It did at first put me upon the Study of this Subject. Nor is it incongruous to handle this now in order to the *Christian Charter*, I shewed you there the great things which God hath in Reversion; *Things to come are his*, and here, behold a Christians holy and gracious Deportment in this Life, which discovers it self in nothing more emphatically than in *Contentation*. Discontent is

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to the Soul, as a Disease to the Body; it puts it out of Temper, and doth much hinder its regular and sublime Motions heaven-ward. Discontent is hereditary, and no doubt but it is much augmented by the many sad Eclipses and Changes that have fallen out of late in the Body politick; yet the Disease is not to be pleaded for, because natural; but to be resisted because sinful. That which should make us out of Love with this sullen Distemper, is the contemplating the beautiful Queen of *Contentation*. For my part, I know not any Ornament in Religion that doth more bespangle a Christian, or glitter in the Eye of God and Man, than this of *Contentment*. Nor certainly is there any thing wherein all the Christian Vertues do work more harmoniously, or shine more transparently, than in this Orb. Every Grace doth act its Part here, and help to keep the Soul in its *Euexia*; this is the true Philosophers Stone, which turns all into Gold; this is the curious Enamel and Embroidery of the Heart, which makes Christs Spouse *all glorious within*. How should every Christian be ambitious to wear such a sparkling Diamond! If there be

be a blessed Life before we come at Heaven, it is the contented Life. And why not contented? *Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?* Gen. 4. Man, of all Creatures hath the least cause to be discontented. Canst thou deserve any thing from God? Doth he owe thee any thing? What if the Scene turn, and God puts thee under the *black Rod?* Whereas he useth a Rod, he might use a Scorpion; he might as well damn thee as whip thee: Why then are thou so querelous? Why dost thou give way to this irrational and unthankful Sin of Discontent: The good Lord humble his own People for nourishing such a Viper in their Breast, as doth not only eat out the Bowels of their Comfort, but spit Poison in the Face of God himself. O Christian, who art overspread with this *fretting Leprosie*, thou carriest the *Mass of Sin* about thee; for thou settest thy self above God; and, as if thou wert wiser than he, wouldst saucily prescribe him what Condition is best for thee. O this *Devil of Discontent*, which whomsoever it possesseth it makes his Heart a little Hell. I know there will not be perfect Content-

ment

ment here in this Life. Perfect Pleasure is only at *God's Right Hand*, Psal. 16. 11. yet we may begin here to tune our Instrument before we play the sweet Lesson of contentment exactly in Heaven. I should be glad if this little Piece might be like *Moses* his casting the Tree into the Waters, Exod. 15. 25. to make the uncouth, bitter condition of Life, more sweet and pleasant to think of. I have once more adventured into the Publick; this I acknowledge to be *rude* and *homespun*; some better Hand might have made a more curious Draught: But having preached upon the Subject, I was earnestly solicited by some of my Hearers to publish it; and although it is not drest in that rich Attire of Eloquence, as it might, yet I am not about Poetry, or Oratory, but Divinity; nor is this intended for Fancy, but Practice. If I may herein do any Service, or cast but a Mite into the Treasury of the Churches Grace, I have my Desire. The end of our Living is to live to God, and to lift up his Name in the World. The Lord add an effectual Blessing to this Work, and fasten it as a Nail in a sure place; He of his Mercy make it as spiri-

tual

tual Physick to purge the ill Humour of Discontent out of our Hearts, that so a Crown of Honour may be set upon the Head of Religion, and the Crystal Streams of Joy and Peace may ever run in our Souls; which is the Prayer of him who is desirous to be a faithful Orator for thee at the Throne of Grace.

From my Study at
Stephens Walbrook
May 5. 1653.

Thomas Watson.

TO THE Christian Reader.

A Word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, how good is it? *Prov.* 15. 23. *As God* giveth to his creatures their meat in ſeaſon, *Pſal.* 104. 27. *ſo his* faithful Stewards provide for his houſhold their portion of meat in due ſeaſon, *Luke* 12 42. *And as it is with Corporal Food, the Seaſon addeth much, both to the Value and Uſefulneſs thereof, in like manner it is with Food Spiritual. In this Regard, the Brokenneſs of theſe Times (wherein the Boſoms of moſt People are filled with Diſquiets, and their Mouths with Murmurings) may well render this Treatiſe the more acceptable. The Seas are not ſo ſtormy as Mens Spirits are tempeſtuous, toſſed to and fro with Diſcontents. And now the Lord* (who maketh every thing beautiful in his time, *Eccl.* 3. 11.) *hath moſt opportunely put into thy Hand a profitable Diſcourſe to calm unquiet Hearts.* Adam *in Paradiſe daſhed upon the Rock of Diſcontent* (*which ſome*

Divines

Divines conceive was his first Sin.) This with many Instances more in Scripture, together with our own sad Experience, doth both speak our Danger and call for Caution. Now Godliness is the only sovereign Antidote against this spreading Disease; and God's Grace alone (being settled and exercised in the Heart) can cause Stedfastness in stormy Times, Heb. 13. 9. *Whereas Contentation ariseth either from the Fruition of all Comforts, or from a not desiring of some which we have not. True Piety doth put a Christian into such a Condition, Hereby we both possess God, and are taught how to improve him, who is the only satisfying everlasting Portion of his People.* Psal. 73. 25, 26. *Herein Christ (though poor in this World,* Matth. 8. 20.) *greatly rejoiced. The Lord is the Portion of my Inheritance, the Lines are fallen unto me in pleasant Places; yea, I have a goodly Heritage,* Psal. 16. 5, 6. *Upon this Account also Jacob said I have enough,* Gen. 33. 11. *or (as it is in the Original) I have all. God the Father, and Christ his Son had sweet Satisfaction in each other when there was no other being,* Prov. 8. 30, 31. *Therefore such who possess and improve God*

through

through Christ cannot possibly be dissatisfied. The Almighty is the God of all Grace, 1 Pet. 5. 10. of all Comfort, 2 Cor. 1. 3. and of Salvation, Psal. 68. 20. In which respects neither Deficiencies or Disappointments, Losses or Crosses, can cause disquieting Discontents in that Bosom where Faith is Commander in Chief. The Prophet Habakkuk rejoiced in the God of his Salvation, when the Pestilence went before him, Hab. 3. 5. and burning Coals came forth of his Feet, Ver. 17, 18. and when he supposed all Creature-succours, both for Delight and Necessity, to be quite removed. This is the Life which Christians should endeavour, and may attain by the vigorous regular Actings of precious Faith. This is the Quint of Contentment, which comes by Godliness, when Providences are black and likely to be bloody: Now, the just shall live by his Faith, Hab. 2. 4. Heb. 10. 38. The Speech of learned Mr. Gataker is weighty and well worthy the marking, A contented Mind argues a religious Heart, and a discontented Mind argues an irreligious Heart. And that worthy Divine Mr. Greenham would say, They never felt God's Love or tasted forgiveness of Sins, who are discontented

contented. *This likewise was an holy Breathing of reverend Dr.* Hall *in his Meditations*, I have somewhat of the best things, I will with thankfulness enjoy them, and will want the rest with Contentment. *By attaining and maintaining this frame of Heart, we might have much of Heaven on this side Heaven. Holy Contentment maketh them truly Rich, whom the oppressing World maketh very Poor. Hereby our sweetest Morsels shall be well seasoned, and our bitterest Potions well sweetned*, Prov. 17. 1. *Had we learned to enjoy Contentment in* Jehovah, *who is immutable and all-sufficient, this heavenly frame of Spirit should never perish or change in the midst of the most amazing Alterations in Church and State, with which his Divine Majesty is pleased to exercise us; whereas because we live alone upon Sublunaries, therefore we are apt with* Nabal *to die upon the Nest*, 1 Sam. 25. 37. *through Dejectedness, upon the Approach of imagined Dangers. When God seeth Cause to cut us short of many Creature-accommodations, Faith will moderate our Desires after them, assuring the Soul that nothing is withheld or with-held which might be really advantageous; and doubtless it is a great piece of*

Happiness upon Earth, not to long after that which the Lord is pleased to deny. Indeed men act rather like Heathens than Christians, when they fret upon some particular inferiour Disappointments; notwithstanding God's Liberality laid forth upon them in many other Respects. As Alexander the Monarch of the World was discontented, because Ivy would not grow in his Gardens at Babylon. Diogenes the Cynick was herein more wise, who finding a Mouse in his Sachel, said, he saw that himself was not so poor; but some were glad of his Leavings. Oh how might we (if we had Hearts to improve higher Providences) reck our peevish Spirits quiet by much stronger Arguments! Let us then lay before our Eyes the Practices of pious Men recorded in Scripture for our Imitation, as Jacob, Agur, Paul, &c. Gen. 28. 20. Prov. 30. 8. 1 Tim. 6. 7. and let us charge home upon our Consciences, divine Exhortations backed with strong Reasons, and encouraged with sweet Promises. It was the grave Counsel of holy Greenham; Having Food and Raiment, take the rest as an Overplus. Gen. 32. 10. Are we not less than the

least of God's Mercies? Is not God our bountiful Benefactor? why then do we not rest contented with his liberal Allowance? Oh let us chide our wrangling Spirits, and encourage Confidence with Contentment in God, as blessed David did.

My Pen hath outrun my Purpose when I undertook this Preface; but I will no longer (good Reader) detain thee in the Porch, wherein I have designed to quicken and to prepare thee to the more fruitful Improvement of this seasonable and useful Treatise; wherein the Author hath exercised to good Purpose, both the Christian Graces, and Ministerial Gifts with which God hath enriched him. Herein the Doctrine of Christian Contentment is clearly illustrated, and profitably applied; the special Cases (wherein through Change of Providences Discontents are most commonly occasioned) are particularized, and Preservatives applied to secure the Soul. Although some other worthy Divines have been helpful to the Church of God by their Discourses upon this Subject; yet there is much of peculiar Use in this Treatise. The Apostle tells us that some Manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every Man to profit withal,

To the Christian Reader.

1 Cor. 12. 7. Thy Soul-profit is propounded as the Author's End in publishing this Piece; And that this End may be accomplished, is the unfeigned Desire, and hearty Prayer of him who is

Thy Servant, in

May 3.
1653. and for Christ,

Simeon Ashe.

THE

THE ART OF Divine Contentment.

CHAP. I.

The Introduction to the Text.

Phil. 4. 11.

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

THese Words are brought in by way of *Prolepsis*, to anticipate and prevent an Objection. The Apostle had in the former Verses laid down many grave and heavenly Exhortations; among the rest, to be *careful for nothing*,

Verse 6. Not to exclude, 1. *A prudential Care.* For, *He that provideth not for his own house, hath denyed the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*, 1 Tim. 5. 8. Nor, 2. *A Religious Care.* For we must give all *diligence to make our Calling and Election sure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. But 3. To exclude all *anxious care* about the issues and events of things; *Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat*; Mat. 6. 25. and in this sense it should be a Christians care not to be careful. The word in the Greek [*Careful*] comes from a Primitive, that signifies, *To cut the heart in pieces*, a soul-dividing Care; take heed of this. We are bid to *commit our way unto the Lord*; Psal. 37. 5. the Hebrew word is, *Roll thy way upon the Lord*, It is our work to cast care, and it is Gods work to take care. By our immoderacy we take his work out of his hand.

Care, when it is *excentrick*, either distrustful, or distracting, is very dishonourable to God, it takes away his providence, as if he sate in heaven and minded not what became of things here below; like a man that makes a clock, and then leaves it to go of it self. Immoderate care takes the heart off from better things; and usually while we are thinking how we shall do to live, we forget how to die. *Curis tabescibus omnes.* —— Care is a spiritual canker, that doth waste and dispirit; *& cui bono?* We may sooner by our care add a *furlong* to our grief, then a *cubit* to our comfort. God doth threaten it as a curse; *They shall eat their bread with carefulness*; Ezek. 12. 19. better fast, than eat of that bread. *Be careful for nothing.*

Now lest any one should say, yea, *Paul* thou preachest that to us, which thou hast scarce learn-

ed thy self; Hast thou learned not to be carefull? The Apostle seems tacitly to answer that, by the words of the Text; *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

Egregia Sententia! A speech worthy to be engraven upon our hearts, and to be written in Letters of Gold upon the Crowns and Diadems of Princes. The Text doth branch it self into these two general parts.

I. The Scholar, *Paul: I have learned.*

II. The Lesson: *In every state to be content.*

CHAP. II.

The first branch of the Text. The Scholar, with the first Proposition.

I Begin with the first. I. The Scholar, and his Proficiency; *I have learned.* Out of which I shall *in transitu* observe two things by way of paraphrase. 1. It is not *known*, but *learned*. The Apostle doth not say, I have *heard*, that in every state I should be content; but, I *have learned*. Whence 1. Doctr. *It is not enough for Christians to hear their duty, but they must learn their duty.* It is one thing to hear, and another thing to learn; as it is one thing to eat, and another thing to concoct. Saint *Paul* was a Practicioner. Christians hear much, but it is to be feared, learn little. There were four sorts of ground in the Parable, Mat. 13. 5. and but one good ground. As for [illegible] of this Truth, many *Hearers*, but few

Learners

Learners. There are two things which keep us from learning

1. *Slighting what we hear.* Christ is the *Pearl of Price*; when we disesteem this Pearl, we shall never learn, either its value, or its vertue. The Gospel is a rare Mystery; in one place it is called the *Gospel of Grace*, Acts 20. 24. in another; *the Gospel of Glory*; 1 Cor. 4. 4. because in it, as in a transparent Glass, the glory of God is resplendent; But, he that hath learned to contemn this Mystery, will hardly ever learn to obey it. He that looks upon the things of Heaven as things by the by, and perhaps the driving of a trade, or carrying on some politick design, to be of greater importance; this man is in the high road to damnation, and will hardly ever learn the things of his peace. Who will learn that which he thinks is scarce worth learning?

2. *Forgetting what we hear.* If a Scholar have his Rules laid before him, and he forgets them as fast as he reads them, he will never learn, *James* 1. 25. *Aristotle* calls the Memory, the *Scribe of the Soul*; and *Bernard* calls it the *Stomack of the Soul*, because it hath a retentive faculty, and turns heavenly food into blood and spirits. We have great memories in other things, we remember that which is *vain*. *Cyrus* could remember the name of every Souldier in his huge Army; we remember *injuries*. This is to fill a precious Cabinet with dung; but, *quam facilis oblivio veri?* as *Hierom* saith, how soon do we forget the sacred truths of God? We are apt to forget three things; our *faults*, our *friends*, our *instructions*. Many Christians are like Sieves, put a Sieve into the water, and it is full; but take it forth of the water, and all runs out: So, while they are hear-

ing of a Sermon, they remember something? but take the Sieve out of the water, as soon as they are gone out of the Church, all is forgotten. *Let these sayings* (saith Christ) *sink down into your ears*; Luk. 9. 42. in the Original it is, *Put these sayings into your ears.* As a man that would hide a Jewel from being stollen, locks it up safe in his cheft. *Let them sink*; The word must not only fall as dew that wets the leafe, but as rain which soaks to the root of the tree, and makes it fruitifie. Oh how often doth Satan, that Fowle of the Air, pick up the good seed that is sown!

Use. Let me put you upon a serious trial; Some of you have heard much; you have lived forty, fifty, sixty years under the blessed Trumpet of the Gospel; What have you learned? You may have heard a thousand Sermons, and yet not learned one. Search your consciences.

1. You have heard much against sin: are you *Hearers*? or are you *Scholars*?

How many Sermons have you heard against *Covetousness*; That it is the *root* on which *Pride*, *Idolatry*, *Treason*, do grow? 1 *Tim.* 2. & 4. One calls it a Metropolitan sin: it is *malum complexum*, it doth twist a great many sins in with it. There is hardly any sin, but Covetousness is a main ingredient into it; and yet are you like the two daughters of the Horse-leach, that cry *Give, give*. How much have you heard against *rash Anger*, that it is a short phrensie, a dry drunkenness, That it rests in the *bosome of fools*; and upon the least occasion do your spirits begin to take fire? How much have you heard against *Swearing*? It is Christs express mandate, *Swear not at all*; Mat. 5. 34. this sin of all other may be termed the *unprofitable work of darkness*; Eph. 5. 11. It is neither sweet-

ned

ned with pleasure, nor enriched with profit (the usual vermilion wherewith Satan doth paint sin.) Swearing is forbid with a *sub pœna*. While the swearer shoots his oaths, like *flying arrows* at God, to pierce his glory; God shoots a *flying roll* of curses, *Zech.* 5. v. 2. & 4. against him; and do you make your tongue a *racket*, by which you toss oaths as Tennis-balls? Do you sport your selves with oaths as the Philistines did with *Samson*, which will at last pull the house about your ears? Alas! how have they learned what sin is, that have not yet learned to leave sin? doth he know what a Viper is, that plays with it.

2. You have heard much of Christ, have you learned Christ? The Jews (as one saith) carried Christ in their *Bibles*, but not in their *heart*; Their sound *went into all the earth*, Rom. 10. 18. The Prophets and Apostles were as Trumpets, whose sound went abroad into the world; yet many thousands who heard the noise of these Trumpets, had not learned Christ, *They have not all obeyed*, ver. 16.

1. A man may know much of Christ, and yet not learn Christ. The *Devils* knew Christ; Mar. 1. 24.

2. A man may preach Christ, and yet not learn Christ; as *Judas* and the Pseudo-Apostles; *Phil.* 1. 15.

3. A man may profess Christ and yet not learn Christ. There are many Professors in the world that Christ will profess against; *Mat.* 7. 22, 23.

Quest. What is it then to learn Christ?

Answ. 1. To learn Christ, is to be *made like* Christ;

Christ; when the Divine Characters of his Holiness are engraven upon our hearts. *We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image*; 2 Cor. 3. 18. There is a Metamorphosis made, a sinner viewing Christs Image in the glass of the Gospel, is transformed into that Image. Never did any man look upon Christ with a spiritual eye, but went away quite changed. A true Saint is a Divine Landskip or Picture, where all the rare beauties of Christ are lively pourtrayed and drawn forth. He hath the same Spirit, the same Judgment, the same Will with Jesus Christ.

2. To learn Christ, is to *believe* in him; *My Lord, my God*; Joh. 20. 28. When we do not only *credere Deum*, but *in Deum*; which is the actual application of Christ to our selves, and as it were the spreading of the sacred medicine of his blood upon our souls. You that have heard much of Christ, and yet cannot with an humble adherence say, *My Jesus*; be not offended if I tell you, the Devil can say his Creed as well as you.

3. To learn Christ, is to *live Christ*. When we have Bible-conversations, our lives as rich Diamonds cast a sparkling lustre in the Church of God; *Phil.* 1. 27, and are (in some sense) parallel with the life of Christ, as the Transcript with the Original. So much for the first Notion of the Word.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Containing the Second Proposition.

II. THis Word μεμαθηκα, *I have learned*, is a word imports difficulty: it shews how hardly the Apostle came by his Contentment of Mind; it was not *Naturæ genuinum*. St. *Paul* did not come naturally by it, but he had *learned* it: It cost him many a prayer and tear, it was taught him by the Spirit.

Whence *Doct.* 2. *Good things are hard to come by.*

The business of Religion is not so facile as most do imagine, *I have learned*, saith St. *Paul*. Indeed you need not learn a man to sin, this is natural, *Psal.* 58. 3. and therefore facile, it comes as water out of a Spring. 'Tis an easie thing to be wicked; Hell will be taken without storm; but matter of Religion must be learned. To cut the flesh is easie, but to prick a vein, and not cut an artery is hard. The trade of sin needs not to be learned, but the *Art of Divine Contentment* is not atchieved without holy industry; *I have learned.*

There are two pregnant reasons, why there must be so much study and exercitation:

1. Because spiritual things are *against Nature*. Every thing in Religion is Antipodes to Nature. There are in Religion two things, *Credenda* &

Fac-

Facienda, and both are againſt Nature. 1. *Credenda*, Matters of *Faith*. As, for a man to be juſtified by the righteouſneſs of another, to become a fool that he may be wiſe, to ſave all by loſing all; this is *againſt Nature*. 2. *Facienda*, Matters of *Practice*. As, 1. *Self-denial*; for a man to deny his own *wiſdom*, and ſee himſelf blind; his own *will*, and have it melted into the will of God; plucking out the right eye, beheading and crucifying that ſin which is the *favourite*, and lies neareſt to the heart: For a man to be dead to the world, and in the midſt of want to abound; for him to take up the Croſs, and follow Chriſt, not only in golden, but bloody paths; to embrace Religion when its dreſs'd in its night-cloaths, all the Jewels of Honour and Preferment being pull'd off; this is *againſt Nature*, and therefore muſt be learned. 2. *Self-examination*, for a man to take his heart (as a watch) all in pieces, to ſet up a ſpiritual Inquiſition, or Court of Conſcience, and traverſe things in his own ſoul; to take *Davids* candle and lantern, *Pſal.* 119. 105. and ſearch for ſin; nay, as Judge to paſs the Sentence upon himſelf, 2 *Sam.* 24. 17. this is *againſt Nature*, and will not eaſily be attained to without Learning. 3. *Self-reformation*, to ſee a man as *Caleb*, *of another ſpirit*, walking antipodes to himſelf, the current of his life altered, and running into the channel of Religion, this is wholly *againſt Nature*: When a ſtone aſcends, it is not a natural motion, but a violent; the motion of the ſoul heaven-ward, is a violent motion, it muſt be learned: fleſh and blood is not skilled in theſe things: Nature can no more caſt out Nature, then Satan can caſt out Satan.

2. Because spiritual things are *above Nature*. There are some things *in Nature* that are hard to find out, as the causes of things, which are not learned without study. *Aristotle* a great Philosopher (whom some have called an Eagle falle from the clouds) yet could not find out the motion of the River *Euripus*, therefore threw himself into it: What then are divine things, which are in a sphere above Nature, and beyond all humane disquisition? as the Trinity, the Hypostatical Union, the Mystery of Faith; to believe against hope; only Gods Spirit can light our candle here. The Apostle calls these *the deep things of God*; 1 *Cor.* 2. 10. The Gospel is full of Jewels, but they are lock'd up from sense and reason. The Angels in heaven are searching into these sacred depths, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12.

Use. Let us beg the Spirit of God to teach us: we must be *divinitus edocti:* The Eunuch could read, but he could not understand, till *Philip joyned himself to his chariot*; Acts 8. 29. God's Spirit must joyn himself to our chariot; He must teach, or we cannot learn: *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord*; Isa. 54. 13. A man may read the figure on the Dial, but he cannot tell how the day goes, unless the Sun shine upon the Dial; we may read the Bible over, but we cannot learn to purpose, till the Spirit of God *shine into our hearts*; 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. Oh, implore this blessed spirit, it is Gods Prerogative Royal to teach. *Learn the Lord thy God, that teacheth thee to profit*; Isa. 48. 17. ministers may tell us our Lesson, God only can *teach* us: We have lost both our hearing and eye-sight, therefore are very unfit to learn. Ever since *Eve* listened to the Serpent, we have

been deaf; and since she looked on the tree of Knowledge, we have been blind; but when God comes to teach, he removes these impediments; *Isa.* 35. 5. We are naturally *dead*; *Eph.* 2. 1. who will go about to teach a dead man? Yet behold, God undertakes to make dead men to understand Mysteries! God is the grand Teacher. This is the reason the Word preached works so indifferently upon men; two in a Pew, the one is wrought upon effectually, the other lies at the Ordinances as a dead child at the breast, and gets no nourishment. What is the reason? because the heavenly gale of the Spirit blows upon one, and not upon the other? One hath *the anointing of God, which teacheth him all things*; 1 John 2. 27. the other hath it not. Gods Spirit speaks sweetly, but irresistibly. In that heavenly Doxology, none could sing the new Song, but those who were *sealed in their foreheads*; Revel. 14. 2. Reprobates could not sing it. Those that are skilful in the Mysteries of Salvation, must have the Seal of the Spirit upon them. Let us make this our prayer, *Lord, breath thy Spirit into thy Word*: and we have a promise, which may add wings to prayer. *If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke 11. 13.

And thus much of the First Part of the Text: *The Scholar*, which I intended only as a short Gloss or Paraphrase.

CHAP. IV.

The Second Branch of the Text, The Lesson *it self, with the Proposition.*

II. I Come now to the second, which is the main thing, *The Lesson* it self; *In whatever state I am, therewith to be content.*

Here was a rare piece of Learning indeed, and certainly more to be wondered at in Saint *Paul*, that he knew how to turn himself to every condition, then all the learning in the World besides, which hath been so applauded in former ages by *Julius Cæsar*, *Ptolomy*, *Xenophon*, the great Admirers of Learning.

The Text hath but few words in it, *In every state content*; but if that be true which once *Fulgentius* said, That the most Golden Sentence is ever measured by *brevity* and *suavity*, then this is a most accomplished Speech: here is *Magnum in parvo*. The Text is like a precious Jewel, little in *quantity*, but great in *worth* and *value*.

The main Proposition I shall insist upon, is this: *That a gracious spirit is a contented spirit.* The Doctrine of Contentment is very superlative; and till we have learned this, we have not learned to be Christians.

1. It is an *hard Lesson.* The Angels in heaven had not learned it; they were not contented. Though their estate was very glorious, yet they were still soaring aloft, and aiming at something higher. *Jude* ver. 6. *The Angels which kept not their first estate.* They kept not their estate, because

cause they were not contented with their estate. Our first Parents cloath'd with the white robe of innocency in Paradise, had not learned to be content; they had aspiring hearts, and thinking their humane Nature too low and home-spun, would be crowned with the Deity, and be *as gods*; Gen. 3, 5. Though they had the choice of all the Trees in the Garden, yet none would content them, but the *Tree of Knowledge*, which they supposed would have been as Eye-salve, to have made them omniscient. Oh then, if this Lesson were so hard to learn *in Innocency*, how hard shall we find it, who are clogged with corruption?

2. It is of *Universal extent*, it concerns all.

1. It concerns *Rich men*. One would think it needless to press those to Contentment, whom God hath blessed with great Estates, but rather perswade them to be humble and thankful; nay, but I say; *Be content*. Rich men have their Discontents as well as others. As appears, 1. When they have a great Estate, yet they are discontented that they have no more; they would make the hundred talents a thousand. A man in wine, the more he drinks, the more he thirsts: Covetousness is a dry Dropsie; an Earthly heart is like the *Grave, that is never satisfied*; Prov. 30. 16. therefore I say to you Rich men, *Be content*.

2. Rich men, if we may suppose them to be content with their Estates (which is very seldom;) yet, though they have *Estate* enough, they have not *Honour* enough: if their *Barns* are full enough, yet their *Turrets* are not high enough. They would be some body in the World, as *Theudas*, *who boasted himself to be some body*; Acts 5. 36. they never go so chearfully as when the Wind of Honour and Applause fills their Sails;

If this wind be down, they are discontented. One would think *Haman* had as much as his proud heart could desire; he was set above all the Princes, advanced upon the pinacle of honour to be the second man in the Kingdom; *Esth.* 3. 1. yet in the midst of all his pomp, because *Mordecai* would not uncover and kneel, he is discontented, *ver.* 2. and full of wrath, *ver.* 5. and there is no way to asswage this Pleurisie of Revenge, but by letting all the Jews blood, and offering them up in sacrifice. The itch of Honour is seldom allayed without blood; therefore I say to you Rich men, *Be content.*

3. Rich men, if we may suppose them to be content with their honour and magnificent titles; yet they have not always Contentment in their *relations.* She that lies in the bosom, may sometimes blow the coals, as *Jobs* Wife, who in a pet would have him fall out with God himself, *Curse God and die.* Sometimes children cause discontent; how oft is it seen that the Mothers milk doth nourish a Viper? and he that once sucked her breast, goes about to suck her blood? Parents do often *of Grapes* gather thorns, and of *Figs* thistles; Children are Sweet-briar. Like the Rose, which is a fragrant flower, but, as *Basil* saith, it hath its prickles. Our Relative comforts are not all pure wine, but mixed; they have in them more dregs than spirits, and are like that River *Plutarch* speaks of, where the waters in the morning run sweet, but in the evening run bitter. We have no *Charter of Exemption* granted us in this life; therefore Rich men had need be called upon to be contented.

2. The

2. The Doctrine of Contentment concerns poor men. You that do ſuck ſo liberally from the breaſts of Providence, *Be content*; it is an hard Leſſon, therefore it had need be ſet upon the ſooner. How hard is it when the livelihood is even gone, a great Eſtate boiled away almoſt to nothing, then to be content? The means of Subſiſtence is in Scripture called *our Life*, becauſe it is the very ſinews of life. The woman in the Goſpel ſpent *all her living upon the Phyſicians*; Luk. 8 43. in the Greek it is ὅλον τὸν βίον, She ſpent her whole life upon the Phyſicians, becauſe ſhe ſpent her means by which ſhe ſhould live. 'Tis much when poverty hath dipped her wings, then to be content: but *Difficilia pulchra*; though hard, it is excellent; and the Apoſtle here had learnt *In every ſtate to be content.*

God had brought Saint *Paul* to as great variety of conditions, as ever we read of any man, and yet he was content; elſe ſure he could never have gone through it with ſo much chearfulneſs. See into what viciſſitudes this bleſſed Apoſtle was caſt. *We are troubled on every ſide*, 2 Cor. 4. 8. there was the *ſadneſs* of his condition; *but not diſtreſſed*, there was his *content* in that condition; *We are perplexed*, there is his *affliction*; but not in *deſpair*, there is his contentation. And if we read a little further, *In afflictions, in neceſſities; in diſtreſſes, in ſtripes, in impriſonments, in tumults, &c.* 2 Cor. 6. 4. there is his trouble, and behold his content; ver. 10. *As having nothing, yet poſſeſſing all things.* When the Apoſtle was driven out of all, yet in regard of that ſweet Contentment of Mind (which was like Muſick in his Soul) he poſſeſſed all. We read a ſhort Map or

History

Hiſtory of his ſufferings, 2 Cor. 11. 23, 24, 25. *In priſons more frequent, in deaths oft*, &c. Yet behold the bleſſed frame and temper of his ſpirit, *I have learned in whatſoever ſtate I am, therewith to be content.*

Which way ſoever Providence did blow, he had ſuch heavenly skill and dexterity, that he knew how to ſteer his courſe. For his outward eſtate he was indifferent; he could be either on the top of *Jacobs* ladder, or the bottom; he could ſing either *placentia* or *lachrymæ* the Dirge or the Anthem; he could be any thing that God would have him: *I know how to want, how to abound*, here is a rare pattern for us to imitate. *Paul* in regard of his faith and courage, was like a Cedar, he could not be ſhaken; but for his outward condition, he was like a *Reed*, bending every way with the wind of Providence. When a proſperous gale did blow upon him, he could bend with that *I know how to be full*: and when a boiſterous guſt of affliction did blow, he could bend in humility with that; *I know how to be hungry*. Saint *Paul* was (as *Ariſtotle* ſpeaks) like a *Die*, that hath four ſquares; throw it which way you will, it falls upon a bottom: Let God throw the Apoſtle which way he would, he fell upon this *bottom* of Contentment. A Contented Spirit is like a Watch, though you carry it up and down with you, yet the ſpring of it is not ſhaken, nor the wheels out of order, but the Watch keeps its perfect motion: So it was with Saint *Paul*, though God had carried him into various conditions, yet he was not lift up with the one, nor caſt down with the other. The *ſpring* of his heart was not broken, the *wheels* of his affections were not diſordered, but kept their conſtant motion towards heaven;

heaven; *Still content.* The Ship that lies at anchor, may sometimes be a little shaken, but never sinks: Flesh and blood may have its fears and disquiets, but grace doth check them: A Christian having cast anchor in heaven, his heart never sinks; a gracious spirit is a contented spirit.

This is a rare Art, *Paul* did not learn it at the feet of *Gamaliel.* *I am instructed*, ver. 12. I am initiated into this holy mystery; as if he had said, I have gotten the *Divine Art*, I have the knack of it; God must make us right Artists. If we should put some men to an Art that they were not skill'd in, how unfit would they be for it? put an husband-man to Limning or Drawing Pictures, what strange Work would he make? this is out of his sphere. Take a Limner that is exact in laying of colours, and put him to Plough, or set him to Planting and Grafting of Trees, this is not his Art, he is not skill'd in it: Bid a natural man live by faith, and when all things go cross, *Be contented*; you bid him do that he hath no skill in; you may as well bid a child guid the stern of a Ship: To live contented upon God in the deficiency of outward comforts, is an Art which *flesh and blood hath not revealed*; nay, many of Gods own children, who excel in some duties of Religion, when they come to this of *Contentment*, how do they bungle? they have scarce commenced Masters of this Art.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The resolving of some Questions.

FOr the Illustration of this Doctrine, I shall propound these Questions.

Quest. 1. Whether a Christian may not be sensible of his condition, and yet be contented?

Answ. Yes; For else he is not a *Saint*, but a *Stoick*. *Rachel* did well to weep for her children (*there was nature;*) but her fault was, she refused to be comforted (*there was discontent.*) Christ himself was sensible when he sweat great drops of blood, and said, *Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*; Mat. 26. 39. yet he was contented, and sweetly submitted his will. *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* The Apostle bids us *stumble our selves under the mighty hand of God*, 2 Pet. 5. 6. which we cannot do unless we are sensible of it.

Quest. 2. Whether a Christian may not lay open his grievances to God, and yet be contented?

Answ. Yes: *Unto thee have I opened my cause*, Jer. 20. 12. and *David poured out his complaint before the Lord*; Psal. 142. 2. We may cry to God, and desire him to write down all our injuries; Shall not the child complain to his Father? When any burden is upon the spirit, Prayer gives vent, it easeth the heart: *Hannah*'s spirit was burdened,

am (says she) *a woman of a troubled spirit*, 1 Sam. 1. 18. Now having prayed and wept, she went away, and was no more sad; only, here is the difference between an holy complaint, and a discontented complaint; in the one we complain *to* God, in the other we complain *of* God.

Quest. 3. What is it properly that Contentment doth exclude?

Answ. There are three things which Contentment doth banish out of its Diocess, and can by no means consist with it.

1. It excludes a *vexatious repining*, this is properly the daughter of Discontent. *I mourn in my complaint*; Psal. 55. 2. he doth not say, I murmur in my complaint. Murmuring is no better then mutiny in the heart; it is a rising up against God. When the Sea is rough and unquiet, it casts forth nothing but foam; when the heart is discontented, it casts forth the foam of anger, impatience, and sometimes little better then blasphemy. Murmuring is nothing else but the scum which boils off from a discontented heart.

2. It excludes an *uneven discomposure*: When a man saith, I am in such straits, that I know not how to evolve or get out, I shall be undone. Head and heart are so taken up, that a man is not fit to pray, or meditate, *&c.* he is not himself: just as when an army is routed, one man runs this way, and another that, the Army is put into disorder: So a mans thoughts run up and down distracted. Discontent doth dislocate and unjoynt the Soul, it pulls off the wheels.

3. It excludes a *childish dispondency*; and this is usually consequent upon the other. A man being

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in an hurry of mind, not knowing which way to extricate or wind himself out of the present trouble, begins *succumbere oneri*, to faint and sink under it. For Care is to the mind as a burden to the back, it loads the spirits, and with overloading sinks them. A dependent spirit is a discontented spirit.

CHAP. VI.

Shewing the Nature of Contentment.

HAving answered these Questions, I shall in the next place come to describe this αὐτάρκεια, or Contentment.

It is a sweet temper of Spirit, whereby a Christian carries himself in an equal poize in every condition. The Nature of this will appear more clear in these three Aphorisms.

1. Contentment is a *Divine Thing*; it becomes ours not by *acquisition*, but *infusion*, it is a slip taken off from the Tree of Life, and planted by the Spirit of God in the Soul; it is a fruit that grows not in the Garden of Philosophy, but is of an heavenly Birth: It is therefore very observable, that *Contentment* is joyned with *Godliness*, and goes in Equipage; *But Godliness with Contentment is great gain*; 1 Tim. 6. 6. Contentment being a consequent or Godliness, or Concomitant, or *both*: I call it *Divine*, to contradistinguish it to that Contentment which a Moral

man

man may arrive at. Heathens have seemed to have this Contentment, but it was only the shadow and picture of it, the *Beryl*, not the true *Diamond*: theirs was but *civil*, this is *sacred*: theirs was only from principles of *Reason*, this of *Religion*: theirs was only lighted at Nature's torch, this at the Lamp of Scripture. Reason may a little teach Contentment; as thus, Whatever my condition be, this is that I am born to, and if I meet with crosses, it is but a Catholick misery; all have their share, why therefore should I be troubled? Reason may suggest this; and indeed, this may be rather *constraint*, then *content*, but to live securely and chearfully upon God in the abatement of creature supplies, *Religion* only can bring this into the Souls Exchequer.

2. *Contentment* is an *Intrinsecal Thing*, it lies within a man; not in the bark, but the root. Contentment hath both its fountain and stream in the soul. The Beam hath not its light from the Air: the beams of comfort which a contented man hath, do not arise *extrinsece*, from foreign comforts, but from within. As sorrow is seated in the Spirit, *The heart knows its own grief*; Prov. 14. 10. So Contentment lies within the *Soul*, and doth not depend upon Externals. Hence I gather, that outward troubles cannot hinder this blessed Contentment; it is a spiritual thing, and ariseth from spiritual grounds, *viz.* *The apprehension of Gods love.* When there is a tempest without, there may be musick within: a Bee may sting through the skin, but it cannot sting to the heart: Outward afflictions cannot sting to the heart, where *Contentment* lies. Thieves may plunder us of our money and plate, but not of this pearl of Contentment, unless

we are willing to part with it; for it is locked up in the *cabinet of the heart*. The soul which is possessed of this rich treasure of Contentment, is like *Noah* in the Ark, that can sing in the midst of a Deluge.

3 *Contentment* is an *Habitual Thing*, it shines with a fixed light in the firmament of the soul. Contentment doth not appear only now and then, as some Stars which are seen but seldom: it is a settled temper of the heart. One action doth not denominate: he is not said to be a liberal man, that gives alms once in his life; a covetous man may do so; but he is said to be liberal, that is *given to liberality*; Rom. 12. 13. that is, who upon all occasions is willing to indulge the necessities of the poor: so he is said to be a contented man that is given to Contentment. It is not *casual*, but *constant*. *Aristotle* in his Rhetorick, distinguisheth between colours in the face that arise from *passion*, and those which arise from *complexion*; the pale face may look red when it blusheth, but this is only a passion: he is said properly to be ruddy and sanguine, who is constantly so, it is his complexion. He is not a contented man, who is so upon an occasion (and perhaps when he is pleased;) but who is so constantly, it is the habit and complexion of his Soul.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Reasons pressing to Holy Contentment.

HAving opened the Nature of Contentment, I come next to lay down some Reasons or Arguments to Contentment, which may preponderate with us.

The first is, *Gods Precept.* It is charged upon us as a duty; *Be content with such things as you have*; Heb. 13. 5. the same God who hath bid us believe, hath bid us be content; if we obey not, we run our selves into a spiritual *Præmunire.* Gods Word is a sufficient Warrant; it hath *authority* in it, and must be a *Supersedeas*, or *sacred Spell* to Discontent; *Ipse dixit* was enough amongst *Pythagoras* his Scholars. *Be it enacted*, is the Royal Stile. Gods Word must be the Star that guids, and his Will the Weight that moves our Obedience; his *fiat* is a Law, and hath majesty enough in it to captivate us into obedience; our hearts must not be more unquiet than the raging Sea, which at his Word is still'd, *Mat.* 8. 26.

2. The second Reason inforcing Contentment, is, *Gods Promise*: For, *He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. 13. 5. Where God hath engaged himself under hand and seal, for our necessary provisions. If a King should say to one of his Subjects, I will take care for thee; as long as I have any Crown-revenues, thou shalt be provided for; if thou art in danger, I will secure thee; if in want, I will supply thee; would

not that Subject be content? Behold, God hath here made a Promise to the Believer, and as it were entered into Bond for his security, *I will never leave thee*; Shall not this charm down the Devil of Discontent? *Leave thy fatherless children with me, I will preserve them alive*; Jer. 49. 11. Me thinks I see the godly man on his death-bed much discontented, and hear him complaining What will become of my Wife and Children when I am dead and gone? they may come to poverty: saith God, Trouble not thy self, *Be content*, I will take care of thy Children, and, *Let thy Widow trust in me.* God hath made a Promise to us, *that he will not leave us*, and hath entail'd the Promise upon our *Wife and Children*, and will not this satisfie? True Faith will take Gods single Bond without calling for Witnesses.

3. Be contented, *by vertue of a Decree.* Whatever our condition be, God the great Umpire of the World, hath *ab æterno* decreed that condition for us, and by his Providence ordered all appurtenances thereunto. Let a Christian often think with himself, who hath plac'd me here; whether I am in higher Sphere, or in a lower? not chance or fortune (as the purblind Heathens imagined) no, it is the wise God, that hath by his Providence fixed me in this Orb: We must act that Scene which God will have us: say not, Such a one hath occasioned this to me; look not too much at the under-wheel. We read in *Ezekiel* of *a wheel within a wheel*; Ezek. 1. 16. Gods *Decree* is the cause of the turning of the wheels, and his Providence is the inner wheel that moves all the rest. Gods Providence is that Helm which turns about the whole Ship of the Universe. Say then as holy *David*,

vid, *I was silent, because thou, Lord, didst it*; Psal. 39. 9. Gods Providence (which is nothing else but the carrying on of his Decree) should be a *supersedeas* and counterpoison against Discontent; God hath set us in our station, and he hath done it in wisdom.

We fancy such a condition of life good for us, whereas if we were our own carvers we should often cut the worst piece. *Lot* being put to his choice, did chuse *Sodom*, Gen. 13. 10. which soon after was burnt with fire. *Rachel* was very desirous of children, *Give me children or I die*, Gen. 30. 1. and it cost her her life in bringing forth a child. *Abraham* was earnest for *Ishmael*, *O that Ishmael may live before thee!* Gen. 17. 18. but he had little comfort either of him or his seed; he was born a son of strife, *His hand was against every man, and every mans hand against him.* The Disciples wept for Christ's leaving the world, they chose his corporal presence, whereas it was best for them that Christ should be gone; *for else the Comforter would not come*; Joh. 16. 7. *David* chose the life of his child, *he wept and fasted for it*; 2 Sam. 12. 16. whereas if the child had lived, it would have been a perpetual monument of his shame. We stand oft in our own light; if we should sort, or parcel out our own comforts, we should hit upon the wrong. Is it not well for the child, that the Parent doth chuse for it? were it left to its self, it would perhaps chuse a knife to cut its own fingers. A man in a Paroxysme calls for wine, which if he had, were little better than poison: 'tis well for the Patient, that he is at the Physicians appointment.

The consideration of a Decree determining, and a Providence disposing all things that fall out,

should work our hearts to holy Contentment. The wise God hath ordered our condition; if he sees it better for us to abound, we shall abound; if he sees it better for us to want, we shall want; be content to be at Gods dispose.

God sees in his infinite wisdom, the same condition is not *convenient* for all; that which is good for one, may be bad for another: one season of weather will not serve all mens occasions; one needs *Sunshine*, another *Rain*: one condition of life will not fit every man, no more then one suit of apparel will fit every body: Prosperity is not fit for all, nor yet Adversity. If one man be brought low, perhaps he can bear it better; he hath a greater stock of grace, more faith and patience; he can *gather grapes of thorns*, pick some comfort out of the Cross; every one cannot do this. Another man is seated in an eminent place of dignity; he is fitter for it: perhaps it is a place requires more parts and judgment, which every one is not capable of; perhaps he can use his estate better, he hath a publick *heart* as well as a publick *place*. The wise God sees that condition to be bad for one which is good for another; hence it is he placeth men in diff. rent Orbs and Spheres; some higher, some lower: one man desires *health*, God sees sickness better for him; God will work health out of sickness, by bringing the *body of death* into a consumption. Another man desires *liberty*, God sees restraint better for him; he will work his liberty by restraint; when his feet are bound, his heart shall be most enlarged. Did we believe this, it would give check to the sinful disputes and cavils of our hearts, shall I be discontented at that which is enacted by a Decree, and ordered by a Providence? Is this to be a child, or a rebel?

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

USE I.

Shewing how a Christian may make his Life comfortable.

Use I. IT shews us how a Christian may come to lead a comfortable Life, even an Heaven upon Earth, be the Times what they will; *viz.* by *Christian Contentment*, Prov. 15. 13. The Comfort of Life doth not stand in having much: It's Christ's Maxime, *Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he doth possess*, Luke 12. 15. but it is in being contented. Is not the Bee as well contented with feeding on the Dew, or sucking from a Flower, as the Ox that grazeth on the Mountains? Contentment lies within a Man, *in the Heart*; and the Way to be comfortable, is not by having our Barns filled, but our Minds quiet. The contented Man (saith *Seneca*) is the happy Man; Discontent is a fretting Humour which dries the Brains, wastes the Spirits, corrodes and eats out the Comfort of Life. Discontent makes a Man that he doth not *enjoy* what he doth *possess*. A Drop or two of Vinegar will sowre a whole Glass of Wine. Let a Man have the Affluence and Confluence of worldly Comforts, a Drop or two of Discontent will imbitter and poyson all. *Comfort* depends upon *Contentment*; *Jacob* went halting when the Sinew upon the Hollow of his Thigh shrank: so when the Sinew of Contentment begins to shrink, we go halting in our Comforts.

sorts. Contentation is as necessary to keep the Life comfortable, as Oil is necessary to keep the Lamp burning; the Clouds of Discontent do often drop the Showers of Tears. Would we have Comfort in our Lives? We may have it if we will. A Christian may carve out what Condition he will to himself. Why doth thou complain of thy Troubles? It is not Trouble that troubles, but Discontent; it is not the Water without the Ship, but the Water that gets within the Leak which drowns it; it is not outward Affliction that can make the Life of a Christian sad; a contented Mind would sail above these Waters: But when there is a Leak of Discontent open, and Trouble gets into the Heart, then it is disquieted and sinks. Do therefore as the Mariners, pump the Water out and stop this spiritual Leak in thy Soul, and no Trouble can hurt thee.

CHAP. IX.

USE II.

A Check to the Discontented Christian.

Use II. HEre is a just Reproof to such as are discontented with their Condition. This Disease is almost Epidemical. Some not content with their Callings which God hath set them in, must be a Step higher, from the *Plough* to the *Throne*; who like the *Spider* in the *Proverbs*, will *take hold with their Hands and be in Kings Pala-*

ces,

ces, Prov. 30. 28. Others from the *Shop* to the *Pulpit*, Num. 12. 2. They would be in the Temple of *Honour*, before they are in the Temple of *Vertue*; who step into *Moses's* Chair, without *Aaron's* Bells and Pomegranates; like Apes, which do most shew their Deformity when they are climbing. Is it not enough that God hath bestowed Gifts upon Men in private to edifie, that he hath enriched them with many Mercies; but, *seek they the Priesthood also?* Numb. 16. 9. What is this but Discontent arising from high-flown Pride? These do secretly tax the Wisdom of God, that he hath not screwed them up in their Condition a Peg higher. *Tenet Superbia, ut frangat.* Every Man is complaining that his Estate is no better, *Suæ quemque conditionis pœnitet:* One Man commends this Kind of Life, another commends that; one Man thinks a Country-Life best; another a City-Life, as the Poet elegantly expresseth it.

O fortunati Mercatores, gravis annis
Miles ait, multo jam fractus membra labore;
Contra Mercator navim jactantibus austris,
Militia est potior, quid enim concurritur horæ
Momento? cita mors venit, aut victoria læta. Horat.

The Soldier thinks it best to be a Merchant; and the Merchant to be a Souldier. Men can be content to be any thing but what God will have them. We may cry out with the same Poet,
Qui fit Mecœnas, ut nemo quam sibi sortem
Seu ratio dederit, seu sors objecerit, illa
Contentus vivat? laudet diversa sequentes?
Hor. 1. Satyr.

How

How is it that no Man is contented? Very few Christians have learned Saint *Paul's* Lesson; neither poor nor rich know how to be content, they can learn any thing but this.

1. If Men are poor, they learn to be, 1. *Envious*; they maligne those that are above them. Anothers prosperity is an eye-sore. When God's candle shines upon their Neighbours Tabernacle this light offends them. In the midst of want men can (in this sense) abound; *viz.* in envy and malice: An envious eye is an evil eye. 2. They learn to be *querulous*, still complaining, as if God had dealt hardly with them; they are ever telling of their wants, they want this and that comfort, whereas their greatest want is a contented spirit. Those that are well enough content with their *sin*, yet are not content with their *condition*.

2. If men are rich, they learn to be *covetous*, thirsting insatiably after the world, and by any unjust means scraping it together; *their right hand is full of bribes*, as the Psalmist expresseth it, *Psal.* 26. 10. Put a good cause in one scale, and a piece of Gold in the other, and the Gold weighs heaviest. There are (saith *Solomon*) four things that say, *It is not enough*; Prov. 30. 15. I may adde a fifth, *viz. the heart of a covetous man.* So that neither poor nor rich know how to be content.

Never certainly since the Creation did this sin of discontent *reign*, or rather *rage*, more than in our times; never was God more dishonoured; you can hardly speak with any, but the passion of his tongue betrays the discontent of his heart: every one lisps out his trouble, and here even the

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stammering tongue speaks too freely and fluently.

If we have not what we desire, God shall not have a good look from us, but presently we are sick of discontent; and ready to die out of an humour. If God will not give the People of *Israel* for their lusts, they bid him take their lives; they must have Quails to their Manna. *Ahab* though a King (and one would think his Crown-lands had been sufficient for him, yet) is sullen and discontented for *Naboths* Vineyard. *Jonah* though a good man and a Prophet, yet ready to die in a *pet*; Jonah 4. 8. and because God kill'd his Gourd, kill me too, saith he. *Rachel*, *Give me children, or I die*; she had many blessings, if she could have seen them, but wanted this of *contentation*. God will *supply our wants*, but must he satisfie our *lusts* too? Many are discontented for a very trifle; another hath a better dress, a richer jewel, a newer fashion. *Nero* not content with his *Empire*, was troubled that the Musicians had more skill in Playing than he: How phantastick are some, that pine away in discontent for the want of those things, which if they had, would but render them more ridiculous.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

USE III.

A Swasive to Contentment.

Use III. IT exhorts to labour for Contentation. this is that which doth beautifie and bespangle a Christian, and as a *spiritual embroidery*, doth set him off in the eys of the world.

But methinks I hear some bitterly complaining, and saying to me, Alas, how is it possible to be contented, the *Lord hath made my chain heavy*, Lam. 3. 7. he hath cast me into a very sad condition.

Answ. There is no sin, but labours either to hide it self under some mask; or if it cannot be concealed, then to vindicate it self by some Apology. This sin of discontent I find very witty in its Apologies, which I shall first discover, and then make a Reply. We must lay it down for a Rule, that discontent is a *sin*, so that all the pretences and apologies wherewith it labours to justifie it self, are but the painting and dressing of a strumpet.

SECT.

SECT. I.

The first Apology that Discontent makes, answered.

The first Apology which Discontent makes, is this; I have lost a child. *Paulina* upon the loss of her children, was so possessed with a spirit of sadness, that she had like to have intombed her self in her own Discontent; our love to *Relation* is oftentimes more than our love to *Religion*.

Answ. 1. We must be content, not only when God gives mercies, but when he taketh them away. If we must *in every thing* give thanks, 1 *Thes.* 5. 18. then *in nothing* be discontented.

2. Perhaps God hath taken away the *Cistern*, that he may give you the more of the *Spring*; he hath darkened the Star-light, that you may have more Sun-light. God intends you shall have more of himself, and is not he better than *ten Sons*? Look not so much upon a temporal loss, as a spiritual gain; the comforts of the world *run dregs*; those which come out of the Granary of the Promise, are purer and sweeter.

Your child was not given, but lent: I have, saith *Hanna*, *lent my son to the Lord*, 1 Sam. 1. 28. She lent him? the Lord had but lent him to her. Mercies are not entailed upon us, but lent; what a man lends, he may call for again when he please. God hath put out a child to thee a while to nurse,

wilt thou be displeased if he takes his child home again? O be not discontented, that a mercy is taken away from you; but rather be thankful, that it was lent you so long.

4. Suppose your child be taken from you, either he was good or bad; if he was *Rebellious*, you have not so much parted with a child, as a burden: you grieve for that which might have been a greater grief to you: if he was *Religious*, then remember he is taken *from the evil to come*, Isa 57. 1. and placed in his center of felicity. This lower Region is full of gross and hurtful vapours; how happy are those who are mounted into the Celestial Orbs! The righteous *is taken away*; in the Original it is, he is *gathered*, a wicked child is cut off, but the pious child is gathered. Even as we see men gather flowers, and candy them, and preserve them by them; so hath God gathered thy child as a sweet flower, that he may candy it with glory, and preserve it by him for ever. Why then should a Christian be discontented; why should he weep excessively? *Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me, but weep for your selves:* Luk. 23. 28. So could we hear our children speaking to us out of heaven, they would say, Weep not for us who are happy, we lie upon a soft pillow, even in the bosom of Christ; *the Prince of Peace* is embracing us and kissing us with the kisses of his lips, be not troubled at our preferment; *Weep not for us*, but weep for your selves, who are in a sinful sorrowful world: you are in the *valley of tears*, but we are on the *mountains of spices*; we are gotten to our harbour, but you are still tossing upon the waves of inconstancy. O Christian, be not *discontented* that thou hast parted with such a child, but rather rejoyce

rejoyce that thou hadſt ſuch a child to part with. Break forth into thankfulneſs. What an honour is it to a Parent to beget ſuch a child, that while he lives increaſeth the *joy* of the glorified Angels; Luk. 15. 10. and when he dies, increaſeth the *number* of the glorified Saints?

5. If God hath taken away one of your children, he hath left you more, he might have ſtripped you of all. He took away all *Jobs* comforts, his *eſtate*, his *children*, and indeed his wife was left, but as a croſs. Satan made a bow of this rib (as *Chryſoſtom* ſpeaks) and ſhot a tentation by her at *Job*, thinking to have ſhot him to the heart; *Curſe God and die*: but *Job* had upon him the breſt-plate of *Integrity*; and though his children were taken away, yet not his graces; ſtill he is content, ſtill he bleſſeth God. O think how many mercies you ſtill enjoy; yet our baſe hearts are more diſcontented at one loſs, than thankful for an hundred mercies.

God hath plucked one bunch of Grapes from you, but how many precious Cluſters are left behind?

Object. But it was my only child, the ſtaff of my age, the ſeed of my comfort, and the only bloſſom, out of which the honour of an ancient family did grow.

Anſw. 1. God hath promiſed you (if you belong to him) a name, *better than of ſons and daughters*; Iſa. 56. 5. Is he dead that ſhould have been the Monument to have kept up the name of a Family? God hath given you *a new name*, he hath written your name in the Book of Life; behold,

your Spiritual Heraldry; here is a name that cannot be cut off.

2. Hath God taken away thy *only child*? he hath given thee his *onely Son*: this is a happy exchange. What needs he complain of losses that hath Christ? he is his Fathers *brightness*, Heb. 1. 3. his *riches*, Col. 2. 9. his *delight*, Psal. 42. 1. Is there enough in Christ to delight the heart of God? and is there not enough in him to ravish us with holy delight? He is *wisdom* to teach us, *righteousness* to acquit us, *sanctification* to adorn us, he is that Royal and Princely gift; he is *the bread of Angels*, the joy and triumph of Saints, he is *all in all*: Col. 3. 10. why then art thou discontented? though thy child be lost, yet thou hast him for whom all things are loss.

7. And lastly, let us blush to think that nature should seem to out-strip grace. *Puluillus* an Heathen, when he was about to consecrate a Temple to *Jupiter*, and news was brought to him of the death of his son, would not desist from his enterprize, but with much composedness of mind, gave order for his decent burial.

SECT. II.

The Second Apology answered.

2. Apology that Discontent makes, is, I have a great part of my Estate strangely melted away, and trading begins to fail.

God is pleased sometimes to bring his children very low, and cut them short in their estate, [illegible]

fares with them as with that widow who had nothing in her house save *a pot of oyle*, 2 Kings 3. 2. but be content.

1. God hath taken away your *Estate*, but not your *Portion*. This is a sacred Paradox. Honour and Estate are no part of a Christians Joynture, they are rather *accessaries* than *essentials*; and are extrinsecal and foreign, therefore the loss of these cannot denominate a man miserable, still the portion remains, *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul*; Lam. 3. 24. Suppose one were worth a million of money, and he should chance to lose a pin off his sleeve, this is no part of his Estate, nor can we say he is undone: the loss of sublunary comforts is not so much to a Christians portion, as the loss of a pin is to a million. *These things shall be added to you*; Mat. 6. 32. *adjicientur*, they shall be cast in as an overplus: when a man buys a piece of cloth, he hath an inch or two given in to the measure; now, though he lose his inch of cloth, yet he is not undone, for still the whole piece remains: our outward Estate is not so much in regard of the *Portion*, as an inch of cloth is to the whole Piece; why then should a Christian be discontented, when the title to his spiritual treasure remains? A thief may take away all my money that I have about me, but not my land; still a Christian hath a title to the *land of promise*. *Mary* hath chosen the better part, *which shall not be taken from her*.

2. Perhaps if thy Estate had not been lost, thy Soul had been lost; outward comforts do often quench inward heat. God cannot bestow a Jewel upon us, but we fall so in love with it, that we for-

get him that gave it; what pity is it that we should commit Idolatry with the Creature! God is forced sometimes to drain away an Estate; the Plate and Jewels are often cast over-board to save the Passenger. Many a man may curse the time that ever he had such an Estate, it hath been an *enchantment* to draw away his heart from God. Some there are that *will be rich*, 1 Tim. 6. 9. and they fall into a *snare*. Art thou troubled that God hath prevented a snare? Riches are *Thorns*, Mat. 13. 7. art thou angry that God hath pull'd away a thorn from thee? Riches are compar'd to *thick clay*; Hab. 2. 6. Perhaps thy affections, which are *the feet of the soul*, might have stuck so fast in this golden clay, that they could not have ascended up to heaven, *be content*; if God damn up our outward comforts, it is that the stream of our love may run faster another way.

3. If your Estate be small, yet God can bless a little. 'Tis not how much *money* we have, but how much *blessing*. He that often curseth the bags of gold, can bless the *meal in the barrel*, and the *oyl in the cruse*. What if thou hast not the full fleshpots? yet thou hast a promise, *I will bless her provision*; Psal. 132. 15. and then a little goes a great way; be content, thou hast the dew of a blessing distill'd; *a dinner of greenherbs*, where love is, is sweet; I may add, where the love of God is: another may have more Estate than you, but more care, more riches, less rest: more revenues, but withal more occasions of expence: he hath a greater inheritance, yet perhaps God doth not give him *power to eat thereof*, Eccles. 6. 2. he hath the *dominion* of his estate, not the *use*; he holds more, but enjoys less: in a word, thou hast less gold than he, perhaps less guilt.

4. Yo

4. You did never ſo thrive in your ſpiritual trade; your heart was never ſo low as ſince your condition was low; you were never *ſo poor in ſpirit*, never *ſo rich in faith*. You did never run the ways of Gods *Commandments* ſo faſt as ſince ſome of your golden weights were taken off. You never had ſuch trading for heaven all your life; this is *uberrimus queſtus*. You did never make ſuch adventures upon the promiſe as ſince you left off your Sea-adventures. This is the beſt kind of merchandize; O Chriſtian, thou never had'ſt ſuch incomes of the ſpirit, ſuch ſpring-tydes of joy; and what though weak in Eſtate, if ſtrong in aſſurance? be content, what you have loſt one way, you have gain'd another.

5. Be your loſſes what they will in this kind, remember in every loſs there is only a *ſuffering*; but in every diſcontent there is a *ſin*, and one ſin is worſe than a thouſand ſufferings. What? becauſe ſome of my *revenues* are gone, ſhall I part with ſome of my *righteouſneſs*? ſhall my faith and patience go too? becauſe I do not poſſeſs an Eſtate, ſhall I not therefore poſſeſs my own ſpirit? O learn to be content.

SECT. III.

The Third Apology anſwered.

The third Apology is, It is ſad with me in my relations; where I ſhould find moſt comfort, there I have moſt grief. This Apology or Objection brancheth it ſelf into two partsculars, whereto I ſhall give a diſtinct Reply. 1. My

1. My child goes on in rebellion, I fear I have brought forth a child for the Devil. It is indeed ſad to think that hell ſhould be paved with the skulls of any of our children: and certainly the *pangs of grief* which the mother hath in this kind are worſe than *her pangs of travel*; but though you ought to be humbled, yet not diſcontented: for conſider

1. You may pick ſomething out of your childs undutifulneſs; the childs ſin is ſometimes the Parents Sermon: *quod dolet, docet*: the undutifulneſs of children to us, may be a *memento* to put us in mind of our *undutifulneſs once* to God. Time was when we were rebellious children; how long did our hearts ſtand out as Garriſons againſt God? How long did he parly with us, and beſeech us, ere we would yield? He walked in the tenderneſs of his heart towards us, but we walked in the frowardneſs of our hearts towards him; and ſince grace hath been planted in our ſouls, how much of the wild Olive is ſtill in us? How many motions of the Spirit do we daily reſiſt? How many unkindneſſes and affronts have we put upon Chriſt? Let this open a ſpring of repentance; look upon your childs rebellion, and mourn for your own rebellion.

2. Though to ſee him undutiful is your *grief*, yet not always your *ſin*. Hath a Parent given the child not only the milk of the breſt, but *the ſincere milk of the word?* 1 Pet. 2. 2. Haſt thou ſeaſoned his tender years with Religious Education? thou canſt do no more; Parents can only work knowledge. God muſt work grace; they can only lay the wood together, it is God muſt make it burn;

a Parent can only be a guid to ſhew his child the way to heaven, the Spirit of God muſt be a load-ſtone to draw his heart into that way. *Am I in Gods ſtead* (ſaith *Jacob*) *who hath with-held the fruit of the womb?* Gen. 30. 2. can I give children? So, is a Parent in Gods ſtead to give grace? Who can help it, if a child having the light of Conſcience, Scripture, Education, theſe three Torches in his hand, yet runs wilfully into the deep ponds of ſin? Weep for thy child, pray for him; but do not ſin for him, *by diſcontent*.

3. Say not, you have brought forth a child for the Devil, God can reduce him; he hath promiſed to *turn the heart of the children to their Parents*, Mal. 4. 6. and to open ſprings of grace in the *Deſert*; Iſa. 35. 6. When thy child is going full-ſail to the Devil, God can blow with a contrary wind of his Spirit, and alter his courſe. When *Paul* was breathing out perſecution againſt the Saints, and was ſailing hell-ward, God turns him another way; before he was going to *Damaſcus*, God ſends him to *Ananias*; before a Perſecutor, now a Preacher. Though our children are for the preſent fallen into the *Devils pound*, God can turn them from the power of Satan, *Acts* 26. 18. and bring them in at the *twelfth* hour. *Monica* was weeping for her ſon *Auguſtine*; at laſt God gave him in upon prayer, and he became a famous inſtrument in the Church of God.

2. The ſecond branch of the Objection is, But my husband takes ill courſes; where I looked for honey, behold a ſting.

Anſw. 'Tis ſad to have the living and the dead tied together; yet, let not your heart fret with diſcontent;

content; mourn for his sin, but do not murmur. For,

1. God hath placed you in your relation, and you cannot be discontented, but you quarrel with God. What? for every Cross that befals us, shall we call the infinite wisdom of God in question? O the blasphemy of our hearts!

2. God can make you a gainer by your husbands sin; perhaps you had never been so good, if he had not been so bad. The fire burns hottest in the coldest Climate. God often by a divine *Antiperistasis* turns the sins of others to our good, and makes our *maladies* our *medicines*. The more profane the husband is, oft the more holy the wife grows; the more earthly he is, the more heavenly she grows; God makes sometimes the husbands sin a spur to the wives grace. His exorbitances are *quasi flabellum*, as a pair of bellows to blow up the flame of her zeal and devotion the more.

Is it not thus? doth not thy husbands wickedness send thee to prayer? Thou perhaps hadst never prayed so much, if he had not sinned so much: his deadness quickens thee the more; the stone of his heart is an hammer to break thy heart. The Apostle saith, *The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband*, 1 Cor. 5. 14. but in this sense, the believing wife is sanctified by the unbelieving husband, she grows better, his sin is a whetstone to her grace, and a *medicine* for her security.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

The Fourth Apology answered.

The next Apology that Diſcontent makes, is, But my friends have dealt very unkindly with me, and proved falſe.

Anſw 'Tis ſad when a friend proves like a *Brook in ſummer*, Job. 6. 15. The Traveller being parched with heat, comes to the brook, hoping to refreſh himſelf, but the brook is dried up: yet be content.

1. You are not alone, others of the Saints have been betrayed by friends; and when they have leaned upon them, they have been as a *foot out of joynt*. This was true in the Type, *David*, Pſal. 55. 12, 13. *It was not an enemy reproached me, but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guid and my acquaintance; we took ſweet counſel together*; and in the Antitype Chriſt, he was betrayed by a friend; and why ſhould we think it ſtrange to have the ſame meaſure dealt out to us as Jeſus Chriſt had? *The ſervant is not above his Maſter.*

2. A Chriſtian may often read his ſin in his puniſhment; Hath not he dealt treacherouſly with God? How oft hath he grieved the Comforter, broken his Vows? and through unbelief ſided with Satan againſt God? How oft hath he abuſed love? taking the Jewels of Gods mercies, and making a golden Calf of them, ſerving his own luſts? how oft hath he made the free-grace of God,

God, which should have been a bolt to keep out sin, rather a key to open the door to it? these wounds hath the Lord received *in the house of his friend*, Zech. 13. 6. Look upon the unkindness of thy friend, and mourn for thy own unkindness against God; shall a Christian condemn that in another, which he hath been too guilty of himself?

3. Hath thy friend proved treacherous? perhaps you did repose too much confidence in him. If you lay more weight upon an house than the pillars will bear, it must needs break. God saith, *Trust ye not in a friend*, Micah 7. 5. perhaps you did put more trust in him, then you did dare to put in God. Friends are as *Venice-glasses*, we may use them; but if we lean too hard upon them, they will break: Behold matter of humility, but not of sullenness and discontent.

4. You have a friend in Heaven will never fail you; *There is a friend* (saith *Solomon*) *that sticketh closer than a brother*, Prov. 18. 24. Such a friend is God; he is very studious and inquisitive in our behalf; he hath a debating with himself, a consulting and projecting how he may do us good; he is the *best friend*, which may give contentment in the midst of all discourtesies of friends.

Consider, 1. He is a *loving friend*. God is love, 1 Joh 4. 16. hence he is said sometimes to engrave us on the *Palms of his hand*, Isa. 49. 16. that we may be never out of his eye; and to carry us *in his bosom*, Isa. 40. 11. near to his heart. There is no stop or stint in his love; but as the River *Nilus*, it overflows all the banks: his love is as

far

far *beyond* our Thoughts as it is *above* our Deserts. O the infinite Love of God, in giving the Son of his Love to be made *Flesh*, which was more than if all the Angels had been made *Worms!* God in giving Christ to us, gave his very Heart to us; here is Love penfill'd out in all its Glory, and engraven as with the *Point of a Diamond.* All other Love is Hatred in comparison of the Love of our Friend.

2. He is a *careful* Friend; *He careth for you*, 1 Pet. 5. 7.

1. He minds and transacts our Business as his own, he accounts his Peoples Interests and Concernments as his Interest.

2. He provides for us Grace to enrich us, Glory to ennoble us: It was *David's* Complaint, *No man cared for my soul*, Psal. 142. 4. A Christian hath a Friend that cares for him.

3. He is a *prudent* Friend, *Dan.* 2. 20. A Friend may sometimes err through Ignorance or Mistake, and give his Friend Poyson instead of Sugar; but *God is wise in heart*, Job 9. 4. He is skilful as well as faithful; he knows what our Disease is, and what Physick is most proper to apply; he knows what will do us good, and what Wind will be best to carry us to Heaven.

4. He is a *faithful* Friend; *Deut.* 7. 9, 10. And he is faithful, 1. In his Promises, *In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised*, Tit. 1. 2. God's People are *children that will not lie*, Isa. 63. 8. but God is a God that *cannot* lie; he will not deceive the faith of his People; nay, he cannot: He is called *the Truth*; he can as well cease to be God, as cease to be true. The Lord may sometimes *change* his Promise, (as when he

converts a temporal Promiſe into a ſpiritual) but he can never *break* his Promiſe.

5. He is a *compaſſionate Friend.* Hence in Scripture we read of *the earnings of his bowels,* Jer 31. 20. God's Friendſhip is nothing elſe but Compaſſion; for there is naturally no *Affection* in us to deſire his Friendſhip, nor no *Goodneſs* in us to deſerve it; the load-ſtone is in himſelf. When we were full of *Blood*, he was full of *Bowels*; when we were Enemies, he ſent an Embaſſage of Peace; when our Hearts were turned back from God, his Heart was turned towards us. O the Tenderneſs and Sympathy of our Friend in Heaven! We our ſelves have ſome Relentings of Heart to thoſe which are in Miſery; but it is God who begets all the Mercies and Bowels that are in us, therefore he is call'd *the Father of Mercies*, 2 Cor. 1. 3.

6. He is a *conſtant Friend. His compaſſions fail not, Lam.* 3. 22. Friends do often in Adverſity drop off as leaves in Autumn. *Amici circa Sardinem*, as *Plutarch* ſaith; theſe are rather Flatterers than Friends. *Joab* was for a time faithful to King *David's* houſe, he went not after *Abſalom's* Treaſon, but within a while proved falſe to the Crown, and went after the Treaſon of *Adonijah*; 1 King. 1. 7. God is a Friend for ever. *Having loved his own, he loved them to the end*, Joh. 13. 1. What though I am deſpiſed? yet God loves me: What though my Friends caſt me off? yet God loves me: He loves to the End, and there is no End of that Love.

This methinks, in caſe of Diſcourteſies and Unkindneſſes, is enough to charm down Diſcontent.

SECT

SECT. V.

The Fifth Apology answered.

The next Apology is; I am under great Reproaches. Let not this discontent; For,

1. It is a Sign there is some Good in thee; *Quid mali feci?* saith *Socrates*, What Evil have I done, that this bad Man commends me? The *Applause* of the Wicked usually denotes some *Evil*, and their *Censure* imports some Good, *Psal.* 38. 20. *David* wept and fasted, and that was *turned to his Reproach*, Psal. 69. 10. As we must pass to Heaven through the *Pikes* of Suffering, so through the Clouds of Reproach.

2. If your Reproach be for God, as *David's* was, *For thy sake I have born reproach*, Psal. 69. 7. then it is rather Matter of *Triumph* than Dejection: Christ doth not say, when you are reproached, *be discontented*! but *rejoyce*, Mat. 5. 12. Wear your Reproach as a Diadem of Honour, for now *a Spirit of glory rests upon you*, 1 Pet. 4. 14. Put your Reproaches into the Inventory of your Riches, so did *Moses*, *Heb.* 11. 26. It should be a Christian's Abition to wear his Saviour's Livery though it be sprinkled with Blood, and sullied with Disgrace.

3. God will do us *Good* by Reproach; as *David* said of *Shimei* his Cursing, *It may be the Lord will requite good for his Cursing this Day*, 2 *Sam.* 16. 12. This puts us upon searching out Sin. A Child of God labours to read his Sin in every Stone of Reproach that is cast at him; besides, now we have an Opportunity to exercise Patience and Humility.

4. Jesus Christ was content to be reproached for us; *He despised the shame of the Cross*, Heb. 11. 2. It may amaze us to think that he who was God, could endure to be spit upon, to be crowned with Thorns, *in a kind of Jeer*; and when he was ready to *bow* his Head upon the Cross, to have the Jews in scorn *wag* their Head, and say, *He saved others, himself he cannot save.* The *shame* of the Cross was as much as the *blood* of the Cross: His *Name* was crucified before his *Body*. The sharp Arrows of *Reproach* that the World did shoot at Christ, went deeper into his Heart than the Spear; His Suffering was so ignominious, that, as if the Sun did blush to behold, it withdrew its bright Beams, and masqued it self with a Cloud; (and well it might, when the Sun of Righteousness was in an Eclipse;) all this Contumely and Reproach did the God of Glory *endure*, or rather *despise* for us. Oh then, let us be content to have our Names eclipsed for Christ; let not Reproach lie at our Heart, but let us bind it as a Crown about our Head. Alas, what is Reproach? this is but *small shot*, how will Men stand in the Mouth of the Cannon? those who are discontented at a Reproach, will be offended at a Faggot.

5. Is not many a Man contented to suffer Reproach for maintaining his Lust? and shall not we for maintaining the Truth? Some *glory in that which is their shame*, Phil. 3. 19. and shall we be ashamed of that which is our Glory? Be not troubled at these petty things: He whose Heart is once divinely touched with the Loadstone of God's Spirit, doth account it his honour to be dishonoured for Christ, *Acts* 15. 4. and doth as much despise the Worlds Censure, as he doth their Praise.

6. We

6. We live in an Age, wherein men dare reproach God himself. The *Divinity* of the Son of God is blasphemously reproached by the *Socinian*; The blessed *Bible* is reproached by the *Antiscripturist*, as if it were but a *legend of lies*, and every mans faith a fable; The *Justice* of God is called to the bar of Reason by the *Arminian*; The *Wisdom* of God in his providential actings, is taxed by the *Atheist*; The *Ordinances* of God are decried by the *Familist*, as being too heavy a burden for a *free-born* conscience; and too low and carnal for a sublime Seraphique spirit: The *Ways* of God which have the Majesty of holiness shining in them, are calumniated by the *Profane*; The mouths of men are open against God, as if he were an *hard Master*, and the path of Religion too strict and severe; If men cannot give God a good word, shall we be discontented or troubled, that they speak hardly of us? such as labour to bury the glory of Religion, shall we wonder that their throats are *open sepulchres*, Rom. 3. 31. to bury our good name? Oh let us be contented while we are in Gods scouring house, to have our names sullied a little; the blacker we seem to be here, the brighter shall we shine when God hath set us upon the celestial shelf.

SECT. VI.

The Sixth Apology answered.

The Sixth Apology that Discontent makes, is disrespect in the world. I have not that esteem from men as is suitable to my quality and graces. And doth this trouble? Consider,

1. The world is an unequal Judge; as it is full of *change*, so of *partiality*. The world gives her *Respects*, as she doth her *Places of Preferment*; more by favour often, than desert. Hast thou the ground of real worth in thee? that is best worth is in him that *hath* it; Honour is in him that *gives* it: better deserve respect, and not have it; than have it, and not deserve it.

2. Hast thou grace? God respects thee, and his judgment is best worth prizing. A believer is a person of honour, being *born of God*. Since thou wast *precious in mine eys, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee* Isa. 43. 4. Let the world think what they will of you, perhaps in their eys you are a *cast away*, in Gods eys a *Dove*, Cant. 2. 14. a *Spouse*, Cant. 5. 1. a *Jewel*, Mal. 3. 17. others account you the dregs and off-scouring of the world, 1 *Cor.* 4. 14. but God will give *whole kingdoms for your ransom*; Isa. 43. 5. Let this content, no matter with what oblique eys I am looked upon in the world, if I am *rectus in curia*, God thinks well of me. 'Tis better that God approve, than man applaud. The world may put us in their *Rubrick*, and God put us in his *Black-book*. What is a man the better that his fellow-prisoners commend him, if his Judge condemn him? Oh labour to keep in with God, prize his love: let my fellow-subjects frown, I am contented being a favourite of the King of heaven.

3. If we are the children of God, we must look for disrespect; a believer is in the world, but not of the world: we are here in a pilgrim condition, out of our own Countrey, therefore must not look for the respects and acclamations of the world; it is sufficient that we shall have honour in our own Countrey, *Heb.* 13. 14. 'Tis dangerous to be the worlds favourite.

4. Dis-

4. Discontent arising from disrespect, savours too much of pride; an humble Christian hath a lower opinion of himself than others can have of him. He that is taken up about the thoughts of his sins, and how he hath provoked God, he cries out as *Agur, I am more brutish than any man*; Prov. 30. 2. and therefore is contented, though he be set *among the Dogs of the flock*, Job 30. 1. Though he be low in the thoughts of others, yet he is thankful, that he is not laid *in the lowest hell*; Psal. 86. 13. A proud man sets an high value upon himself, and is angry with others, because they will not come up to his price. Take heed of pride; O had others a window to look into thy breast (as *Crates* once expressed it) or did thy heart stand where thy face doth, thou would'st wonder to have so much respect.

SECT. VII.

The Seventh Apology answered.

The next Apology is, I meet with very great sufferings for the truth; Consider

1. Your *sufferings* are not so great as your *sins*; Put these two in the balance, and see which weighs heaviest, where sin lies heavy, sufferings lie light. A carnal spirit makes more of his sufferings, and less of his sins; he looks upon one at the great end of the Perspective, but upon the other at the little end of the Perspective. The carnal heart cries out, Take away the *Frogs*, but a gracious heart cries, Take away the *iniquity*, 2 Sam. 24. 10. The one saith, never any one suffered as I have done:

done: but the other saith. never any one sinned as I have done, *Mic.* 7. 9.

2. Art thou under sufferings? thou hast an opportunity to shew the valour and constancy of thy mind; some of Gods saints would have accounted it a great favour to have been honoured with martyrdom. One said, I am in prison *till* I am in prison, thou counteſt that a trouble, which others would have worn as an Enſign of their glory.

3. Even those who have gone only upon Moral Principles, have shewn much Constancy and Contentment in their Sufferings. *Curtius* being bravely mounted, and in Armour, threw himself into a great gulf, that the City of *Rome* might according to the Oracle be delivered from the Pestilence; and we having a Divine Oracle, *that they who kill the body cannot hurt the soul*, shall we not with much Constancy and Patience devote our selves to Injuries for Religion, and rather suffer for the truth, than the truth suffer by us? The *Decii* among the Romans, vowed themselves to death, that their legions and souldiers might be crowned with the honour of the victory. O what should we be content to suffer, to make the Truth victorious! *Regulus* having sworn that he would return to *Carthage* (though he knew there was a furnace heating for him there) yet not daring to infringe his oath, he did adventure to go; we then who are Christians, having made a vow to Christ in Baptism, and so oft renewed it in the blessed Sacrament, should with much contentation rather chuse to suffer, then violate our sacred oath. Thus the blessed Martyrs, with what courage and chearfulness did they yield up their souls to God? and when

when the fire was set to their bodies, yet their spirits were not at all fired with passion or discontent. Though others hurt the *body*, let them not the *mind* through discontent; shew by your heroick courage that you are above those troubles which you cannot be without.

SECT. VIII.

The Eighth Apology answered.

The next Apology is, The prosperity of the wicked.

Answ. I confess 'tis so often, that the evil enjoy all the good, and the good endure all the evil. *David*, though a good man, stumbled at this, and had like to have fallen, *Psal.* 73. 2. well, be contented, for remember,

1. These are not the only things, nor the best things, they are mercies without the pale; these are but acorns with which God feeds swine; you who are believers, have more choice fruit, the *Olive*, the *Pomegranate*, the fruit which grows on the true *Vine* Jesus Christ; others have the fat of the earth, you have the dew of heaven; they have a South-land, you have those springs of living water which are clarified with Christs blood, and indulcorated with his love.

2. To see the wicked flourish, is matter rather of *pity* than *envy*; 'tis all the heaven they must have. *Wo to you rich men, for you have received your consolation*, Luk. 6. 24. Hence it was that *David* made it his solemn prayer, *Deliver me from the wicked, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid trea-*

treasure. Psal. 14.17. The words (me thinks) are *Davids Letany*, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, *Good Lord deliver me*. When the wicked have eaten of their dainty dishes, there comes in a sad reckoning which will spoil all. The world is first *musical*, and then *tragical*: if you would have a man fry and blaze in hell, let him have enough of the *fat of the earth*. O remember for every sand of mercy that runs out to the wicked, God puts a drop of wrath into his Vial. Therefore as that souldier said to his fellow, Do you envy me my grapes? they cost me dear, I must die for them. So I say, Do you envy the wicked? alas, their prosperity is like *Hamans* banquet before execution. If a man were to be hanged, would one envy to see him walk to the gallows through pleasant fields and fine galleries, or to see him go up the ladder in cloth of gold? The wicked may flourish in their bravery a while; but, *when they flourish as the grass, it is, that they shall be destroyed for ever*, Psal. 92 7. This proud grass shall be mowed down. Whatever a sinner enjoys, he hath a curse with it, *Mal.* 2. 2. and shall we envy? What if poisoned bread be given to dogs? The long furrows in the backs of the godly, have a *seed of blessing* in them; when the table of the wicked becomes a snare, and their honour their halter.

SECT. IX.

The Ninth Apology answered.

9. The next Apology that Discontent makes for it self, is *the evils of the times*. The times are full of

of Hereſie and Impiety, and this is that which troubles me. This Apology conſiſts of two branches, to which I ſhall anſwer in *ſpecie*; and

1. The times are full of Hereſie. This is indeed ſad, when the Devil cannot by violence deſtroy the Church, he endeavours to poiſon it; when he cannot with *Samſons* Fox-tails ſet the corn on fire, then he ſows tares; as he labours to deſtroy the peace of the Church by *Diviſion*, ſo the truth of it by *Errour*; we may cry out with *Seneca*, *Vere vivimus in temporum fæcibus*, we live in times wherein there is a ſluce open to all novel Opinions, and every mans *Opinion* is his *Bible*. Well, this may make us mourn, but let us not murmur through Diſcontent: Conſider,

1. Errour makes a diſcovery of men,

1. *Bad men*; Errour diſcovers ſuch as are tainted and corrupt. When the Leproſie brake forth in the forehead, then was the *Leper* diſcovered. Errour is a ſpiritual Baſtard; the Devil is the father, and Pride the mother; you never knew an erroneous man, but he was a proud man: now, it is good that ſuch men ſhould be laid open, to the intent, firſt, that Gods righteous judgments upon them may be adored, 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 12. Secondly, that others who are free, be not infected. If a man hath the plague, it is well it breaks forth; for my part I would avoid an Heretick, as I would avoid the Devil, for he is ſent on his errand. I appeal to you, if there were a Tavern in this City, where under a pretence of ſelling wine, many hogſheads of poiſon were to be ſold, were it not well that others ſhould know of it, that they might not buy? it is good that thoſe who have poiſoned Opinions ſhould be known, that the people of God may not come near either the ſcent or taſte of that poiſon.

2. Er-

2. Errour is a *Touch-ſtone* to diſcover *good men*; it tries the gold, *There muſt be Hereſies, that they which are approved, may be made manifeſt*; 1 Cor. 11.11. Thus our love to Chriſt and zeal for truth doth appear. God ſhews who are the living fiſh, *viz.* ſuch as ſwim againſt the ſtream; who are the ſound ſheep, *viz.* ſuch as feed in the green paſtures of the Ordinances, who are the Doves, *viz.* ſuch as live in the beſt aire, where the Spirit breaths; God ſets a Garland of honour upon theſe, *Theſe are they which came out of great tribulation*, Rev. 7.14. So, theſe are they that have oppoſed the Errours of the times, theſe are they that have preſerved the virginity of their Conſcience; who have kept their judgment ſound, and their heart ſoft. God will have a Trophy of Honour ſet upon ſome of his Saints, they ſhall be renowned for their ſincerity, being like the Cypreſs, *quæ viriditatem in hyeme non amittit*; which keeps its greenneſs and freſhneſs in the Winter-ſeaſon.

2. Be not ſinfully diſcontented, for God can make the errours of the Church advantageous to Truth. Thus the Truths of God have come to be more beaten out and confirmed; as it is in *Law*, one man laying a falſe title to a piece of land, the true title hath by this means been the more ſearched into and ratified; ſome had never ſo ſtudied to defend the Truth by *Scripture*, if others had not endeavoured to overthrow it by *Sophiſtry*: all the miſts and fogs of Errour that have riſen out of the bottomleſs pit, have made the glorious Sun of *Truth* to ſhine ſo much the brighter. Had not *Arius* and *Sabellius* broached their damnable Errours, the truth of thoſe queſtions about the bleſſed *Trinity* had never been ſo diſcuſſed and defended by *Athanaſius*, *Auguſtine*, and others,

had

had not the Devil brought in so much of his *princely Darkness*, the Champions for Truth had never run so fast to Scripture to light their Lamps. So that God who hath a *Wheel within a Wheel*, over-rules these things wisely, and turns them to the best. Truth is an heavenly Plant that settles by shaking.

3. God raiseth the Price of his Truth the more; the very Shreds and Filings of Truth are Venerable. When there is much counterfeit Metal abroad, we prize the true Gold the more: the Pure Wine of Truth is never more precious than when unsound Doctrines are broached and vented.

4. Errour makes us more thankful to God for the Jewel of Truth. When you see another infected with the Plague, how thankful are you that God hath freed you from the Infection? When we see others have the *Leprosie in the Head*, how thankful are we to God that he hath not given us over to believe a Lie, and so be damned? It is a good Use that may be made even of the Errour of the Times, when it makes us more humble and thankful, adoring the free Grace of God who hath kept us from Drinking of that deadly Poison.

2. The second Branch of the Apology that Discontent makes, is the *Impiety of the Times*. I live and converse among the Profane, *O that I had Wings like a Dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!* Psal. 55.6. *Answ.* It is indeed sad to be mixed with the Wicked; *David beheld the transgressors and was grieved*, Psal. 110. 58. and *Lot* (who was a bright Star in a dark Night) was *vexed*, or as the Word in the Original may bear, *wearied out, with the unclean conversation of the wicked*, 2 Pet. 2. 7. he made the Sins of *Sodom* Spears to pierce his own Soul; we ought (if there

be any Spark of divine Love in us) to be very sensible of the Sins of others, and to have our Heart bleed for them; yet let us not break forth in murmuring or Discontent, knowing that God in his Providence hath permitted it, and surely not without some Reasons: For,

1. The Lord makes the Wicked an Hedge to defend the Godly; the wise God often makes those who are *wicked* and *peaceable*, a Means to safeguard his People from those who are *wicked* and *cruel*. The King of *Babylon* kept *Jeremy*, and gave special Order for his looking to, that he did want nothing, *Jer.* 39. 11, 12. God sometimes makes *brazen Sinners* to be *brazen Walls* to defend his People.

2. God doth interline and mingle the Wicked with the Godly, that the Godly may be a Means to save the Wicked; such is the *Beauty of Holiness*, that it hath a magnetical Force in it to allure and draw even the Wicked. Sometimes God makes a believing Husband a Means to convert an unbelieving Wife, and *e contra*. *What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?* 1 Cor. 7. 16. The Godly living among the Wicked, by their prudent Advice and pious Example have won them to the Embracing of Religion; if there were not some Godly among the Wicked, how in a probable Way, without a Miracle, can we imagine that the Wicked should be converted? Those who are now shining Saints in Heaven, sometimes *served divers Lusts*, Tit. 3. 3. Paul once a Persecutor; *Augustine* once a Manichee; *Luther* once a Monk; but by the severe and holy Carriage of the Godly, were converted to the Faith.

SECT.

SECT. X.

The Tenth Apology answered.

The next Apology that Discontent makes, is lowness of parts and gifts.

I cannot, saith the Christian, discourse with that fluency, nor pray with that elegancy as others,

Answ. 1. *Grace is beyond gifts*; Thou compareſt thy grace with anothers gifts, there is a vaſt difference; Grace without gifts is infinitely better than gifts without grace; in Religion, the *vitals* are beſt; Gifts are a more extrinſecal and common work of the Spirit, which is incident to reprobates; grace is a more diſtinguiſhing work, and is a Jewel hung only upon the Elect. Haſt thou the *ſeed of God*, the *holy anointing*? be content.

I. Thou ſayeſt, Thou canſt not diſcourſe with that fluency as others.

Answ. Experiments in Religion are beyond Notions, and Impreſſions beyond Expreſſions. *Judas* (no doubt) could make a learned Diſcourſe of Chriſt, but well fare the woman in the Goſpel, that felt vertue coming out of him, *Luk.* 8. 47. A ſanctified heart is better than a ſilver tougue. There is as much difference between gifts and grace as between a Tulip painted on the Wall, and one growing in the Garden.

II. Thou ſayeſt, Thou canſt not pray with that elegancy as others.

Answ. Prayer is a matter more of the *heart* than the *head*. In prayer it is not ſo much *fluency* prevails, as *fervency*; Jam. 5. 16. nor is God ſo much taken with the elegancy of ſpeech, as the efficacy

of the Spirit. Humility is better then volubility here the *mourner* is the *orator*, ſighs and groans are the beſt Rhetorick.

2. Be not diſcontented; For, God doth uſually proportion a mans parts to the place where he calls him: Some are ſet in an higher ſphere and function, their place requires more parts and abilities; but the moſt inferiour member is uſeful in its place, and ſhall have a power delegated for the diſcharge of its peculiar Office.

SECT. XI.

The Eleventh Apology anſwered.

The next Apology is, *The troubles of the Church*. Alas, my diſquiet and diſcontent is not ſo much for my ſelf, as the publick. The Church of God ſuffers.

Anſw. I confeſs it is ſad, and we ought for this *to hang our harps upon the willows*, Pſal. 137. he is a wooden leg in Chriſts body, that is not ſenſible of the ſtate of the body. As a Chriſtian muſt not be *proud fleſh*, ſo neither *dead fleſh*. When the Church of God ſuffers, he muſt ſympathize; *Jeremy* wept *for the Virgin daughter of* Zion. We muſt feel our brethrens hard cords through our ſoft beds; in Muſick, if one ſtring be touched, all the reſt ſound; when God ſtrikes upon our brethren, *our bowels muſt ſound as an Harp*, Iſa. 16. 11. be ſenſible, but do not give way to diſcontent. For conſider,

1. *God ſits at the ſtern of his Church*, Pſal. 46. 5. Sometimes it is as a ſhip toſſed upon the waves, *O thou afflicted and toſſed*, Iſa. 54. 12. but cannot

God

God bring this ship to haven, though it meet with a storm upon the Sea? The ship in the Gospel was tossed, because *sin* was in it; but it was not overwhelmed, because *Christ* was in it. Christ is in the Ship of his Church, fear not sinking; The Churches Anchor is cast in Heaven. Do not we think God loves his Church, and takes as much care of it as we can? The names of the twelve Tribes were on *Aaron's breast*, signifying how near to Gods heart his people are; They are his *portion*, Deut. 32. 9. and shall that be lost? His *glory*, Is. 46. 13. and shall that be finally eclipsed? No certainly. God can deliver his Church, not only *from*, but *by* opposition; the Churches pangs shall help forward her deliverance.

2. *God hath always propagated Religion by sufferings.* The foundation of the Church hath been laid *in blood*, and these sanguine showres have ever made it more fruitful. *Cain* put the knife to *Abel's* throat, and ever since, the Churches veins have bled; but she is like the *Vine*, which by bleeding grows; and like the Palm-tree, which may have this Motto, *Percussa resurgit*, the more weight is laid upon it, the higher it riseth. The holiness and patience of the Saints under their persecutions, hath much added both to the *growth* of Religion, and the *Crown*. *Basil* and *Tertull.* observe of the Primitive Martyrs, that divers of the Heathens seeing their zeal and constancy, turned Christians. Religion is that *Phenix* which hath always revived and flourished *in the ashes* of holy men. *Isaiah* sawen asunder, *Peter* crucified at *Jerusalem* with his head downwards; *Cyprian* Bishop of *Carthage*, *Polycarp* of *Smyrna*, both martyr'd for Religion, yet evermore the Truth hath been *sealed* by blood, and gloriously dispersed; whereupon

Julian did forbear to persecute, *non ex clementia sed invidia*, not out of pity, but envy; because the Church grew so fast, and multiplied, as *Nazianzen* well observes.

SECT. XII.

The Twelfth Apology answered.

The Twelfth Adology that Discontent makes for it self, is this: It is not my trouble that troubles me, but it is my *sins* that do disquiet and discontent.

Answ. Be sure it be so; do not prevaricate with God and thy own soul: in true mourning for sin, when the present suffering is removed, yet the sorrow is not removed; but suppose the Apology be real, and *sin* is the ground of your discontent: Yet I answer, a mans disquiet about sin, may be *beyond its bounds* in these three Cases.

1. When it is *disheartning*, that is, when it sets up sin above mercy. If *Israel* had only pored upon their sting, and not looked up to the *brazen Serpent*, they had never been healed. That sorrow for sin which drives us away from God, is not without sin, for there is more *despair* in it than *remorse*: The soul hath so many tears in its eys, that it cannot see Christ. Sorrow as sorrow, doth not save (that were to make a Christ of our tears) but is useful as it is preparatory in the soul, making sin *vile* and Christ *precious*. Oh look up to the brazen Serpent, *the Lord Jesus*; a sight of his blood will revive, the medicine of his *merits* is broader than our sore.

It is Satans policy, either to keep us from seeing our sins, or if we will needs see them, that we may *be swallowed up of sorrow*, 2 Cor. 27. either he would *stupifie* us, or *affright* us; either keep the glass of the Law from our eys, or else penfil out our sins in such Crimson colours, that we may sink in the *quick sands* of Despair.

2. When sorrow is *indisposing*, it untunes the heart for prayer, meditation, holy conference; it cloisters up the soul. This is not *sorrow*, but rather sullenness, and doth render a man not so much *Penetential*, as *Cinical*

3. When it is *out of season*, God bids us *rejoyce*, and we *hang our harps upon the willows*; he bids us *trust*, and we cast our selves down, and are brought even to the margin of Despair. If Satan cannot keep us from mourning, he will be sure to put us upon it when it is least in season.

When God calls us in a special manner to be thankful for mercy, and put on our white robes, then Satan will be putting us *into mourning*, and instead of a *garment of praise*, cloath us with a *spirit of heavinesse*; so God loseth the acknowledgment of a mercy, and we the comfort.

If thy sorrow hath tuned and fitted thee for Christ, if it hath raised in thee high prizings of him, strong hungerings after him, sweet delight in him; this is as much as God requires, and a Christian doth but sin to vexe and torture himself further upon the wrack of his own Discontent.

And thus I hope I have answered the most material Objections and Apologies which this sin of Discontent doth make for it self. I see no reason why a Christian should be discontented, unless for his Discontent. Let me in the next place propound some-

something which may be both as a loadstone and a whetstone to Contentation.

CHAP. XI.

Divine Motives to Contentment.

AND so I proceed to the Arguments or Motives that may quicken to Contentment.

SECT. I.

The First Argument to Contentation.

1. Consider the excellency of it. Contentment is a flower that doth not grow in every garden; it teacheth a man how in the midst of want to abound. You would think it were excellent, if I could prescribe a Receit or Antidote against Poverty; but behold, here is that which is more excellent, for a man to want, and yet have enough, this alone Contentment of spirit brings. Contentation is a Remedy against all our troubles, a *levamen* to all our burdens, it is *the Cure of Care*. Contentation though it be not properly *a Grace* (it is rather *a disposition of mind*) yet in it there is *Optimum Temperamentum*, an happy Temperature and Mixture of all the Graces: It is a most precious compound which is made up of *Faith, Patience, Meekness, Humility, &c.* which are the ingredients

gredients put into it. Now there are *in ſpecie* theſe ſeven rare excellencies in Contentment.

1. A Contented Chriſtian *carries heaven about him*; For what is Heaven but that ſweet repoſe and full contentment that the ſoul ſhall have in God? in Contentment there is the firſt fruits of heaven.

There are two things in a contented ſpirit which makes it like Heaven.

1. *God is there*; Someething of God is to be ſeen in that heart. A Diſcontented Chriſtian is like a rough tempeſtuous ſea; when the water is rough, you can ſee nothing there; but when it is ſmooth and ſerene, then you may behold your face in the water, *Prov.* 27. 19. When the heart rageth thorow Diſcontent, it is like a rough Sea; you can ſee nothing there, unleſs paſſion and murmuring: there is nothing of God, nothing of heaven in that heart; but by vertue of Contentment, 'tis like the Sea when it is ſmooth and calm; there is *a face ſhining there*, you may ſee ſomething of Chriſt in that heart, a repreſentation of all the graces.

2. *Reſt is there.* O what a Sabbath is kept in a contented heart! What an Heaven! A contented Chriſtian is like *Noah* in the Ark; though the Ark were toſſed with waves, *Noah* could ſit and ſing in the Ark. The ſoul that is gotten into *the Ark of Contentment*, ſits quiet, and ſails above all the waves of trouble; he can ſing in this ſpiritual Ark; The wheels of the Chariot move, but the axle-tree ſtirs not; the circumference of the Heavens is carried about the Earth, but the Earth moves not out of its own centre. When we meet with motion and change in the creatures round about us, a contented ſpirit is not ſtirred or moved out of its centre. The ſails of a mill move with the wind, but

but the mill it self ſtands ſtill: An Emblem of Contentment: When our outward eſtate moves with the wind of providence, yet the heart is ſettled through holy Contentment; when others are like quick-ſilver ſhaking and trembling through diſquiet, the contented ſpirit can ſay as *David*, *O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed*; Pſal. 57. 7. what is this but a piece of heaven?

2. Whatever is defective in the creature, is *made up in Contentment*. A Chriſtian may want the comforts that others have, the land and poſſeſſions; but God hath diſtilled into his heart that Contentment which is far better: In this ſenſe that is true of our Saviour, *He ſhall have in this life an hundred fold*; Mat. 19. 29. Perhaps he that ventured all for Chriſt, never hath his houſe or land again; I, but God gives him a *contented ſpirit*; and this breeds ſuch joy in the ſoul, as is infinitely ſweeter than all his houſes and lands which he left for Chriſt. It was ſad with *David*, in regard of his outward comforts; he being driven (as ſome think) from his Kingdom; yet in regard of that ſweet contentment he found in God, he had more comfort then men uſe to have in time of *harveſt and vintage*; Pſal. 4. 7. One man hath houſe and lands to live upon, another hath nothing, only a ſmall trade; yet even that brings in a livelihood. A Chriſtian may have little in the world, but he drives the trade of Contentment; and ſo he knows as well how to *want*, as to *abound*. O the rare *art*, or rather *miracle* of Contentment! Wicked men are often diſquieted in the enjoyment of all things; the contented Chriſtian is well in the want of all things.

Queſt. But how comes a Chriſtian to be contented in the deficiency of outward comforts?

Anſw.

Answ. A Christian finds Contentment distilled out of the breasts of the Promises. He is poor in *purse*, but rich in *Promise*. There is one promise brings much sweet contentment into the soul; *They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*; Psal. 34. 10. If the thing we desire be good for us, we shall have it; if it be not good, then the not having it is good for us. The resting satisfied with this Promise gives Contentment.

3. Contentment makes a man in tune to serve God, it oils the wheels of the soul, and makes it more agil and nimble; it composeth the heart, and now is fit for prayer, meditation, *&c.* How can he that is in a passion of grief, or discontent, *serve God without distraction*? 1 Cor. 7. 35. Contentment doth prepare and tune the heart. First, you prepare the Viol, and wind up the strings, ere you play a fit of Musick. When a Christians heart is wound up to this heavenly frame of Contentment; then it is fit for duty. A discontented Christian is like *Saul*, when the *evil spirit* came upon him. O what jarrings and discords doth he make in prayer! When an Army is put into a disorder, now it is not fit for battel: When the thoughts are scattered and distracted about the cares of this life, a man is not fit for devotion. Discontent takes the heart wholly off from God, and fixeth it upon the present trouble; so that a mans mind is not upon his *prayer*, but upon his *cross*.

Discontent doth disjoynt the soul, and it is impossible now that a Christian should go so steadily and chearfully in Gods service. O how lame is his devotion! The discontented person gives God but *half* a duty, his Religion is nothing but *bodily exercise*, it wants a soul to animate it. *David* would not offer that to God which *cost him nothing*;

thing; 2 Sam. 24. 24. where there is too much worldly *care*, there is too little ſpiritual *coſt* in a duty. The diſcontented perſon doth his duties *by halves*, he is juſt like *Ephraim*, *a cake not turned*, Hoſ. 7. 8. he is a cake baked on one ſide; he gives God the *outſide*, but not the ſpiritual part, his heart is not in duty; he is baked on one ſide, but the other ſide dough; and what profit is there of ſuch raw, indigeſted ſervices? He that gives God only the skin of worſhip, what can he expect more than the ſhell of comfort? Contentation brings the heart into frame; and then only do we give God the flower and ſpirits of a duty, when the ſoul is compoſed; now a Chriſtian doth *rem agere*, his heart is intenſe and ſerious. There are ſome duties which we cannot perform as we ought without Contentment; as

1. *To rejoyce in God.* How can he rejoyce that is diſcontented? He is fitter for *Repining* than *Rejoycing*.

2. *To be thankful for mercy.* Can a diſcontented perſon be thankful? he can be *fretful*, not thankful.

3. *To juſtifie God in his proceedings*, Ezr. 9. 23. How can he do this who is diſcontented with his condition? He will ſooner cenſure Gods wiſdom, than clear his juſtice. Oh then how excellent is *Contentation*, which doth prepare, and as it were, ſtring the heart for duty? Indeed Contentment doth not only make our duties lively and agil, but *acceptable*. 'Tis this that puts beauty and worth into them; for Contentment *ſettles* the ſoul: Now as it is with *milk*, when it is always ſtirring, you can make nothing of it, but let it ſettle a while, and then it turns to cream: When the heart is overmuch ſtirred with diſquiet and diſcontent, you

can

make nothing of those Duties; how thin, how fletten, and jejune are they? But when the Heart is once settled by holy Contentment, now there is some Worth in our Duties, now they turn to Cream.

4. Contentment is the spiritual *Arch*, or Pillar of the Soul; it fits a Man to *bear Burthens*; he whose Heart is ready to sink under the least Sin, by Virtue of this hath a Spirit invincible under Sufferings. A contented Christian is like the Camomile, the more it is trodden upon, the more it grows; as Physick works Diseases out of the Body, so doth Contentment work Trouble out of the Heart. Thus it argues; If I am under Reproach, God can vindicate me; if I am in Want, God can relieve me. *Ye shall not see wind, nor rain; yet the valley shall be filled with water*, 2 King. 3.17. Thus holy Contentment keeps the Heart from fainting; in the *Autumn* when the Fruit and Leaves are blown off, still there is Sap in the Root. When there is an Autumn upon our external Felicity, the Leaves of our Estate drop off, still there is the Sap of Contentment in the Heart; and a Christian hath Life inwardly, when his outward Comforts do not blossom. The contented Heart is never out of Heart. Contentation is a golden Shield that doth beat back Discouragements. *Humility* is like the Lead to the Net, which keeps the Soul down when it is rising through Passion; and *Contentment* is like the Cork which keeps the Heart up when it is sinking through Discouragement. Contentment is the great Underpropper; it is like the *Beam* which bears whatever Weight is laid upon it; nay, it is like a Rock that breaks the Waves.

'Tis strange to observe the same Affliction lying upon two Men, how differently they carry themselves under it. The contented Christian is like *Sampson*, that carried away the Gates of the City upon his Back, *Judg.* 16. 3. he can go away with his Cross chearfully and makes nothing of it; the other is like *Issachar* couching down under his Burden, *Gen.* 49. 14. The Reason is, the one is content, and that breeds Courage; the other discontented, and that breeds Fainting. Discontent swells the Grief, and Grief breaks the Heart. When this sacred Sinew of Contentment begins to shrink, we go limping under our Afflictions. We know not what Burdens God may exercise us with, let us therefore preserve Contentment; as is our *Contentment*, such will be our *Courage*. *David* with his five Stones, and his Sling defied *Goliah*, and overcame him. Get but Contentment into the Sling of your Heart; and with this sacred Stone you may both defie the World and conquer it; you may break those Afflictions which else will break you.

5. A fifth Excellency is, Contentment prevents many *Sins and Temptations*.

1. It prevents many *Sins*. Where there wants Contentment, there wants no sin; Discontentedness with our Condition is a Sin that doth not go alone, but is like the First Link of the Chain, which draws all the other Links along with it. In particular, there are two Sins which Contentation prevents.

1. *Impatience*. Discontent and Impatience are two Twins; *This Evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* 2 King. 6. 33. As if God were so tied, that he must give us the Mercy just when we desire. Impatience is no small Sin, as

will appear if you consider whence it ariseth; As,

1. It is for want of Faith. Faith gives a right Notion of God; it is an intelligent Grace; it believes that Gods Wisdom tempers, and his Love sweetens all Ingredients; this works Patience; *Shall I not drink of the Cup which my Father hath given me?* Impatience is the Daughter of Infidelity. If a Patient hath an ill Opinion of the Physician, and conceits that he comes to poison him, he will take none of his Receits. When we have a Prejudice against God, and conceit that he comes to kill us and undo us, then we storm, and cry out through Impatience. We are like a foolish Man (tis *Chrysostom's* Simile) that cries out, *Away with the Plaister*, though it be in order to a Cure; is it not better that the Plaister smart a little, than the Wound fester and rankle?

2. Impatience is for want of Love to God. We will bear his Reproofs whom we love, not only patiently, but thankfully. *Love thinks no evil*, 1 Cor. 13. 5. It puts the fairest and most candid Gloss upon the Actions of a Friend; *Love covers evil.* If it were possible for God in the least manner to err, (which were Blasphemy to think) Love would cover that Errour; Love takes every thing in the best Sense; it makes us bear any stroak, *It endureth all things.* 1 Cor. 13. 7. had we Love to God, we should have Patience.

3. *Impatience is for want of Humility.* The Impatient Man was never humbled under the Burden of Sin; he that studies his Sins, the numberless Number of them, how they are twisted together, and sadly accented, is patient, and saith, *I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, because I*

have sinned against him, Mica. 7. 9. The greater Noise drowns the lesser; when the Sea roars, the Rivers are still; he that lets his Thoughts expatiate about Sin, is both silent and amazed, he wonders it is no worse with him. How great then is this Sin of Impatience! and how excellent is *Contentation*, which is a *Supersedeas* or counterpoison against this Sin? The contented Christian believing that God doth all in Love, is patient, and hath not one Word to say unless to justifie God, *Psal.* 51. 4. That is the first Sin which Contentation prevents.

2. It prevents *Murmuring*, a Sin which is a Degree higher than the other; Murmuring is a Quarrelling with God, and Inveighing against him, *They spake against God*, Numb. 21. 5. the Murmurer saith interpretatively, that God hath not dealt well with him, and he hath deserved better from him. The Murmurer *chargeth God with folly*; this is the Language, or rather *Blasphemy* of a murmuring Spirit, God might have been a wiser and a better God. The Murmurer is a Mutineer. The *Israelites* are called in the same Text *Murmurers* and *Rebels*, Numb. 17. 10. and is not Rebellion *as the sin of witchcraft*? Thou that art a Murmurer, art in the Account of God as a *Witch*, a *Sorcerer*, as one that deals with the Devil. This is a Sin of the first Magnitude; Murmuring oft ends in Cursing: *Micha's* Mother fell to cursing, when the *Talents of Silver were taken away*, Judg. 17. 2. So doth the Murmurer when a Part of his Estate is taken away; our *Murmuring* is the Devils *Musick*, this is that Sin which God cannot bear; *How long shall I bear with this people that murmur against me?* Numb. 14. 27. It is a Sin which whets the Sword against a Peo-

is a Land-destroying Sin; *Murmur ye not as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer*, 1 Cor. 10. 10. 'Tis a repining Sin, this, without God's Mercy, will hasten *England's* Funerals. O then how excellent is Contentation which prevents this Sin! To be contented, and yet murmur is a Solœcism; a contented Christian doth acquiesce in his present Condition, and doth not murmur, but admire. Herein appears the Excellency of Contentation, it is a spiritual Antidote against Sin.

2. Contentment prevents many Temptations; Discontent is a Devil that is always tempting. It puts a Man upon *indirect Means*: He that is poor and discontented, will attempt any thing; he will go to the Devil for Riches; he that is proud and discontented will hang himself, as *Achitophel* did when his Counsel was rejected. Satan takes great Advantage of our Discontent; he loves to fish in these *troubled Waters*. Discontent doth both eclipse Reason and weaken Faith; and it is Satans Policy, he doth usually break over the Hedge were it is weakest. Discontent makes a Breach in the Soul, and usually at this Breach the Devil enters by a Tentation and storms the Soul. How easily can the Devil by his *Logick* dispute a discontented Christian into Sin? He forms such a Syllogism as this; He that is in want must study Self-preservation; But you are now in want, therefore you ought to study Self-preservation. Hereupon to make good his *Conclusion*, he tempts to the forbidden Fruit, not distinguishing between what is *needful*, and what is *lawful*. What, saith he, dost thou want a livelihood? never be such a Fool as starve; take the *rising* [illegible] at a venture, be it good or bad, *eat the Bread of Deceit, drink*

the Wine of Violence. Thus you see how the discontented Man is a Prey to that sad Tentation, *to steal, and take God's Name in vain,* Prov. 30. 9. Contentation is a Shield against Tentation; for he that is contented knows as well how to *want* as to *abound.*

He will not sin to get a Living; though the Bill of Fare grows short, he is content. He lives as the Birds of the Air, upon God's Providence, and doubts not but he shall have enough to pay for his passage to Heaven.

2. Discontent tempts a man to *Atheism* and *Apostacy*; sure there is no God to take care of things here below; would he suffer them to be in want who have *walked mournfully before him?* Mal. 3. 14. saith Discontent; Throw off Christs Livery, desist from thy Religion. Thus *Jobs* Wife, being discontented with her Condition, saith to her Husband, *Dost thou still retain thy Integrity?* Job 2. 9. as if she had said, Dost thou not see, Job, what is become of all thy Religion? *Thou fearest God, and eschewest evil,* and what art thou the better? see how God turns his Hand against thee; he hath smitten thee in thy Body, Estate, Relations and *Dost thou still retain thy Integrity?* what? still devout? still weep and pray before him? Thou Fool, cast off Religion, *turn Atheist.* Here was a sore Tentation that the Devil did hand over to *Job*, by his discontented Wife; only his Grace, as a golden Shield, did ward off the Blow from his Heart, *Thou speakest as one of the foolish women.* What Profit is it, saith the discontented Person, *to serve the Almighty?* Those that never troubled themselves about Religion are the prosperous Men, and I in the mean while suffer Want: as good give over driving the Trade of Religion, if this be all my

my Reward. This is a sore Tentation, and oft it prevails; Atheism is the Fruit that grows out of the Blossom of Discontent.

Oh then, behold the Excellency of Contentment; it doth repel this Tentation. If God be mine, saith the contented Spirit, it is enough; though I have no Lands or Tenements, his Smile makes Heaven; *His loves are better than wine*; *Better is the gleanings of* Ephraim, *than the vintage of* Abiezer, *Judg.* 8. 2. I have little *in hand*, but much *in hope*; my *livelihood* is short, but this is his Promise, *even eternal life*, 1 John 2. 25. I am pursued by *Malice*; but better is persecuted Godliness than prosperous Wickedness. Thus Divine Contentment is a spiritual Antidote both against *Sin* and *Tentation*.

6. Contentment sweetens every Condition. Christ turned the Water into Wine, so Contentment turns the Water of *Marah* into spiritual Wine. Have I but little? yet it is more than I can deserve or challenge. This *Modicum* is in Mercy; 'tis the Fruit of Christ's Blood; 'tis the Legacy of Free Grace: a small Present sent from a King is highly valued: this little I have is with a good Conscience. 'Tis not *stollen water*; Guilt hath not muddied or poisoned it; it runs pure. This *little* is a Pledge of more; this Bit of Bread is an Earnest of that Bread which I shall eat *in the Kingdom of God*. This little Water in the Cruse, is an earnest of that Heavenly *Nectar* which shall be distill'd from the *true Vine*. Do I meet with some Crosses? my Comfort is, if they be heavy, I have not far to go; I shall but carry my Cross to *Golgotha*, and there I shall leave it; My Cross is light in regard of the Weight of Glory. Hath God taken away my Comforts from me? 'tis well

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the Comforter ſtill abides. Thus *Contentment* as an Honey-comb drops Sweetneſs into every Condition. Diſcontent is a Leaven that ſowres every Comfort; it puts Aloes and Wormwood upon the Breaſt of the Creature, it leſſens every Mercy, it trebbles every Croſs; but the contented Spirit ſucks Sweetneſs from every Flower of Providence, it can make a Treacle of Poiſon. *Contentment* is full of *Conſolation*.

7. Contentment hath this Excellency, it is the beſt *Commentator* upon Providence; it makes a fair Interpretation of all Gods Dealings. Let the Providences of God be never ſo dark or bloody, Contentment doth conſtrue them ever in the beſt Senſe. I may ſay of it as the Apoſtle of Charity, *It thinks no evil*, 1 Cor. 13. Sickneſs (ſaith Contentment) is God's Furnace, to refine his Gold, and make it ſparkle the more; the Priſon is an Oratory, or Houſe of Prayer. What if God melts away the Creature from me? he ſaw perhaps my Heart grew too much in love with it; had I been too long in that fat Paſture, I ſhould have ſurfeited; and the better my eſtate had been, the worſe my Soul would have been. God is wiſe; he hath done this, either to prevent ſome ſin, or to exerciſe ſome Grace. What a bleſſed Frame of Heart is this? A contented Chriſtian is an Advocate for God againſt Unbelief and Impatience: Whereas Diſcontent takes every thing from God in the worſt Senſe; it doth implead and cenſure God: This Evil I feel is but a Symptom of greater Evil: God is about to undo me; *The Lord hath brought us hither into the Wilderneſs to ſlay us*, Numb. 20. 4. The contented Soul takes all well, and when his Condition is never ſo bad, he can ſay, *Yet God is good*, Pſal. 73. 1.

SECT.

SECT II.

The Second Argument to Contentation.

The Second Argument or Motive to Contentment, is, a Christian hath that which may make him content.

1. Hath not God given thee Christ? in him there are *unsearchable riches*; Eph. 3. 1. He is such a golden *mine* of wisdom and grace, that all the Saints and Angels can never dig to the bottom; as *Seneca* said to his friend *Polybius*, Never complain of thy hard fortune, as long as *Cæsar* is thy friend: so I say to a Believer, never complain as long as Christ is thy friend: He is an inriching pearl, a sparkling Diamond, the infinite lustre of his merits makes us shine in Gods eyes; Eph. 1. 7. in him there is both *fulness* and *sweetness*; he is *ineffabile bonum*. Screw up your thoughts to the highest acme and pinacle, stretch them to the utmost period, let them expatiate to their full latitude and extent; yet they fall infinitely short of those ineffable and inexhaustible treasures which are locked up in Jesus Christ: and is not here enough to give the soul content? A Christian that wants *necessaries*, yet having Christ, he hath *the one thing needful*.

2. Thy soul is exercised and enamell'd with the graces of the Spirit, and is not here enough to give contentment? Grace is of a divine birth; it is the new plantation; it is the flower of the heavenly Paradise; 'tis the embroidery of the Spirit; 'tis *the seed of God*, 1 Joh. 3. 9. tis *the sacred unction*; 1 Joh. 2. 27. 'tis Christs portraiture in the soul; 'tis the very

very foundation on which the superstructure of glory is laid. O, of what infinite value is Grace! What a Jewel is Faith! well may it be call'd *precious* Faith, 2 Pet. 1. 1. What is love, but a divine sparkle in the soul? A soul beautified with grace, is like a room richly hung with Arras, or Tapestry, or the Firmament bespangled with glittering Stars. These are the *true riches*, Luk. 16. 11. which cannot stand with reprobation; and is not here enough to give the soul *Contentment*? What are all other things, but like the wings of a butterfly, curiously painted? but they defile our fingers. Earthly riches, saith *Augustine*, are full of poverty; so indeed they are. For, 1. They cannot enrich the soul; Oftentimes under silken apparel, there is a shred bare soul. 2. These are corruptible: *Riches are not for ever*, as the Wise man saith, Prov. 27. 24. Heaven is a place where gold and silver will not go; a Believer is rich *towards God*, Luk. 12. 21. why then art thou discontented? hath not God given thee that which is better than the world? What if he doth not give thee the box, if he gives thee the Jewel? What if he denies thee farthings, if he pays thee in a better coin? he gives thee gold, viz. spiritual mercies. What if the *water in the bottle* be spent? thou hast enough in the fountain; What need he complain of the worlds *Emptiness*, that hath Gods *Fulness*? The Lord is *my portion*, Psal. 16. 5. saith *David*, then let the lines fall where they will, in a *sick-bed*, or *prison*; I will say, *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage*. 3 Art thou not heir to all the promises? hast thou not a reversion of heaven? when thou letteth go thy hold of natural life, art thou not sure of eternal life? hath not God given thee the earnest and first-

fruits

fruits of glory? is not here enough to work the heart to Contentment?

What though some have a fraught
Of Cloves and Nutmegs, and in Cinamon sail?
If thou hast wherewithal to spice a draught;
When grief is prevail,

And for the future time art heir
To th'Isle of Spices; is't not fair?

SECT. III.

The Third Argument to Contentation.

The Third Argument is, *Be content*, for else we confute our own prayers; We pray, *Thy will be done*; It is the will of God that we should be in such a condition; he hath decreed it, and he sees it best for us: Why then do we murmur, and are discontented at that which we pray for? either we are not in good earnest in our prayer, which argues *hypocrisie*, or else we contradict our selves, which argues *folly*.

SECT. IV.

The Fourth Argument to Contentation.

The fourth Argument to Contentment is, because now God hath his end, and Satan misseth of his end.

1. *God hath his end.* Gods end in all his cross providences, is to bring the heart to submit and be

be content; and indeed this pleaseth God much, he loves to see his children satisfied with that portion he doth carve and allot them. It contents him to see us contented: Therefore let us acquiesce in Gods Providence; Now God hath his end.

2. *Satan misseth of his end.* The end why the Devil (though by Gods permission) did smite *Job*, in his body and estate, was to perplex his mind; he did vex his *body* on purpose, that he might disquiet *his spirit*. He hoped to bring *Job* into a fit of discontent; and then, that he would in a passion break forth against God; but *Job* being so well contented with his condition, as that he falls to *blessing of God*, he did now disappoint Satan of his hope. *The Devil shall cast some of you into prison*, Rev. 2. 10. Why doth the devil throw us into prison? It is not so much the hurting our body, as the molesting our mind, that he aims at; he would imprison our *Contentment*, and disturb the regular motion of our souls; this is his design: 'tis not so much the putting us into a *prison*, as the putting us into a *passion*, that he attempts; but by holy contentation, Satan loseth his prey, he misseth of his end. The devil hath oft deceived us; the best way to deceive him, is by *Contentation* in the midst of *tentation*; our contentment will discontent Satan. Oh, let us not gratifie our enemy. Discontent is the Devils *delight*; now it is as he would have it, he loves to warm himself at the fire of our passions. *Repentance* is the joy *of the Angels*, and *discontent* is the joy *of the Devils*: As the Devil danceth at discord, so he sings at discontent. The fire of our passions makes the devil a bon-fire; 'tis a kind of heaven to him to see us torturing our selves with our own troubles; but

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by holy Contentment we fruſtrate him of his purpoſe, and do as it were, put him out of countenance.

SECT. V.

The Fifth Argument to Contentation.

The next Argument is, by contentment a Chriſtian gets a victory over himſelf: For a man to be able to rule his own ſpirit, this of all others the moſt noble conqueſt, *Prov.* 16. 32. Paſſion denotes weakneſs; to be diſcontented is ſutable to *fleſh* and *blood*, but to be in every ſtate content; reproached, yet *content*; impriſoned, yet *content*; this is above nature; this is ſome of that holy valour and chivalry, which only a divine ſpirit is able to infuſe. In the midſt of the affronts of the world to be patient, and the changes of the world, to have the ſpirit calmed; this is a conqueſt worthy indeed of the Garland of Honour. Holy *Job* deveſted and turned out of all, leaving his *Scarler*, and embracing the *Dunghill* (a ſad Cataſtrophe) yet he had learned Contentment. 'Tis ſaid, *He fell upon the ground and worſhipped*, Job 1. 20. One would have thought he ſhould have fallen upon the ground and *blaſphemed*; no, he fell and *worſhipped*. He adored Gods juſtice and holineſs; behold the ſtrength of grace; here was an humble ſubmiſſion, yet a noble conqueſt; he got the victory over himſelf. 'Tis no great matter for a man to yield to his own paſſions, this is facile and feminine; but to content himſelf in denying of himſelf, this is ſacred.

SECT. VI.

The Sixth Argument to Contentation.

The sixth great Argument to work the heart to Contentment, is, the consideration that all Gods providences, how cross or bloody soever, shall do a Believer good; *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God;* Rom. 8. 28. Not only *all good things*, but *all evil things*, work for good; and shall we be discontented at that which works for our good? Suppose our troubles are twisted together, and sadly accented, as the Poet describes it;

Littora quot conchas, quot amœna Rosaria flores,
Quotve saporiferum grana papaver habet,
Sylva feras quot alit, quod piscibus unda natatur,
Et tenerum pennis aura pulsat avis;
Tot premor adversis, &c. Ovid.

What if sickness, poverty, reproach, Law-suits, &c. do unite and muster their forces against us? All shall work for good; our *maladies* shall be our *medicines*: and shall we repine at that which shall undoubtedly do us good? *Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness*; Psal. 112. 4. Affliction may be baptized *Marah*; 'tis bitter, but *Physical*. Because this is so full of comfort, and may be a most excellent *Catholicon* against Discontent; I shall a little expatiate.

Quest. It will be enquired how the evils of affliction work for good?

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R. Several ways.

1. They are *disciplinary*; they teach us. The Psalmist having very elegantly described the Churches trouble, *Psal.* 74. prefixeth a title to it, which signifies *a Psalm giving instruction*; that which *seals up instruction*, works for good. God puts us sometimes under the *black rod*; but it is *virga disciplinaris*, a rod of discipline; *Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it*; Micah 6. 9. God makes our *Adversity* our *University*. Affliction is a *Preacher*; *Blow the trumpet in Tekoah*, *Jer.* 6. 1. The Trumpet was to preach to the people, as appears, *verse* 6. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem.* Sometimes God speaks to the Minister to lift up his voice like a *Trumpet*; Isa. 58. 1. and and here he speaks to the Trumpet, to lift up its voice like a *Minister*. Afflictions teach us.

1. *Humility*: commonly prosperous, and proud; *corrections* are Gods *corrosives* to eat out the proud flesh. Jesus Christ is *a lily of the vallies*, Cant. 2. 1. he dwells in an humble heart; God brings us into the valley of tears, that he may bring us into the valley of humility; *Remembring my affliction, the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me*: Lam. 3. 19, 20. When men are grown high, God hath no better way with them, then to brew them a *cup of wormwood*. Afflictions are compared to *thorns*; Hos. 2. 8. Gods thorns are to prick the bladder of Pride: suppose a man run at another with a sword to kill him; accidentally it only lets out his impostume, this doth him good. Gods sword is to let out the impostume of Pride; and shall that which makes us *humble*, make us discontented?

2. Afflictions teach us Repentance, *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised. I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh, &c.* Jer. 31. 18, 19. Repentance is the precious fruit that grows upon the *Cross*. When the fire is put under the Still, the water drops from the Roses: fiery afflictions makes the waters of Repentance drop and distil from the eys, and is here an occasion of discontent.

3. Afflictions teach us to pray better, *They poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them;* Isa. 26. 16. Before, they would *say* a prayer, now they *poured* out a prayer; *Vigilabat in cete, qui steterat in navi, Jonah* was asleep in the Ship, but awake and at prayer in the *Whales belly*. When God puts under the fire-brands of affliction, now our hearts boil over the more; God loves to have his children *possessed* with a *spirit of prayer*. Never did *David the sweet singer of Israel* tune his Harp more melodiously; never did he pray better, then when he was *upon the waters*. Thus afflictions do *indisciplinæ*, and shall we be discontented at that which is for our good?

2. Afflictions are *probatory*, Psal. 66. 10, 11. Gold is not the worse for being tried, or corn for being fanned. Affliction is the touchstone of sincerity, it tries what metal we are made of; affliction is Gods *fan* and his *sieve*. 'Tis good that men be known; some serve God for a *livery*, they are like the fisherman that makes use of his net, only to catch the fish: So they go a fishing with the net of Religion, only to catch preferment; Affliction discovers these. The *Donatists* went to the *Gothes*, when the Arians prevailed; Hypocrites will not fail in a storm, true grace holds out in the *winter season*. That is a *precious* [illegible]

which, like the ſtar, ſhines brighteſt in the darkeſt night. 'Tis good that our graces ſhould be brought to a trial; thus we have the comfort, and the Goſpel the honour; and why then diſcontented?

3. Afflictions they are *expurgatory*; theſe evils work for good, becauſe they work out ſin; and ſhall I be diſcontented at this? What if I have more *trouble*, if I have leſs *ſin*? The brighteſt day hath its clouds, the pureſt gold its droſs, the moſt refined ſoul hath ſome lees of corruption. The ſaints loſe nothing in the furnace, but what they can well ſpare, *their droſs*; is not this for our good? why then ſhould we murmur? *I am come to ſend fire on the earth*, Luk. 12. 49. *Tertullian* underſtands it of the fire of *affliction*. God makes this like the fire of the three children, which burned only their bonds, and ſet them at liberty in the furnace: So the fire of affliction ſerves to burn the bonds of iniquity. *By this therefore ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away his ſin*, Iſa. 27. 9. When affliction or death comes to a wicked man, it takes away *his ſoul*; when it comes to a godly man, it only takes away his *ſin*: is there then any cauſe why we ſhould be diſcontented? God ſteeps us in the briniſh waters of affliction, that he may take out our ſpots. Gods people are his husbandry, 1 *Cor.* 3. 9. the ploughing of the ground kills the weeds, and the harrowing of the earth, breaks the hard clods: Gods ploughing of us by affliction, is to kill the weeds of ſin; his harrowing of us, is to break the hard clods of impenitency, that the heart may be the fitter to receive the ſeeds of grace; and if this be all, why ſhould we be diſcontented?

4. Afflictions do both exercise and increase Grace.

First, They *exercise* Grace: Affliction doth breath our Graces? Every thing is most in its excellency, when it is most in its exercise. Our grace though it cannot be dead, yet it may be *asleep*, and hath need of awakening. What a dull thing is the fire when it is hid in the embers, or the Sun when it is masqued with a cloud? a sick man is *living*, but not *lively*; afflictions quicken and excite grace. God doth not love to see grace in the eclipse. Now faith puts forth its purest and most noble acts in times of affliction: God makes the *fall of the leaf* the *spring* of our graces. What if we are more *passive*, if grace be more active.

2. Afflictions do *increase* grace: as the wind serves to increase and blow up the flame; so do the windy blasts of affliction augment and blow up our graces: grace spends in the furnace, but it is like the *widows oyl in the cruse*, which did increase by pouring out. The torch when it is beaten, burns brightest, so doth grace when it is exercised by sufferings. Sharp frosts nourish the good corn, so do sharp afflictions grace; some plants grow better in the shade than in the Sun; as the *Bay* and the *Cypress*. The shade of adversity is better for some than the Sun-shine of prosperity. *Naturalists* observe, that the *Colewort* thrives better when it is watered with salt water than with fresh. So do some thrive better in the salt water of affliction; and shall we be discontented at that which make us grow and fructifie more?

3. These afflictions do bring more of Gods immediate presence into the soul. When we are most assaulted, we shall be most assisted, *I will be with him in trouble*; Psal. 91. 15. It cannot be ill with

that

that man with whom God is by his *powerful presence* in supporting, and his *gracious presence* in sweetning the present trial. God will be with us in trouble, not only to *behold* us, but to *uphold* us; as he was with *Daniel* in the *Lyons den*, and the three children *in the furnace*. What if we have more trouble than others, if we have more of God with us than others have? we never have sweeter smiles from Gods face than when the world begins to look strange; *Thy statutes have been my songs*, where? not when I was upon the throne, but *in the house of my pilgrimage*; Psal. 119. 54. We read, *The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire*; 1 King. 19. 11. but in a metaphorical and spiritual sense: when the wind of affliction blows upon a Believer, God is in the wind; when the fire of affliction kindles upon him, God is in the fire, *viz.* to sanctifie, to support, to sweeten. If God be with us, the furnace shall be turned into a festival, the prison into a Paradise, the earthquake into a joyful dance. Oh why should I be discontented, when I have more of Gods company?

6. These evils of affliction are for good, as they bring with them Certificates of Gods love, and are evidences of his special favour. Affliction is the Saints livery, 'tis a badge and cognizance of honour. That the God of glory should look upon a worm, and take so much notice of him, as to afflict him rather than lose him, is an high act of favour. Gods rod is *Sceptrum Regale*; a *Scepter of dignity*, *Job* calls Gods afflicting of us, *his magnifying* of us, Job 7. 17. Some mens prosperity hath been their shame, when others affliction hath been their crown.

7. These

7. These afflictions work for our good, because they work for us *a far more exceeding weight of glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 71. That which works for my glory in heaven, works for my good; we do not read in Scripture that any mans honour and riches do work for him *a weight of glory*, but afflictions do; and shall a man be discontented at that which works for his glory? The heavier the weight of affliction, the heavier the weight of glory; not that our sufferings do merit glory (as the Papists do wickedly glos) but though they are not *causa*, they are *via*, they are not the cause of our crown, yet they are the way to it, and God makes us, as he did our Captain, *perfect through sufferings*, Heb. 2. 10. and shall not all this make us contented with our condition? Oh I beseech you, look not upon the *evil* of affliction but the *good*. Afflictions in Scripture are called *visitations*, Job 7. 18. the word in the Hebrew, to *visit*, is taken in a *good* sense as well as a *bad*: Gods afflictions are but *friendly visits*; behold here Gods rod like *Aarons rod* blossoming; and *Jonathans rod*, it hath honey at the end of it. Poverty shall starve our sins; the sickness of the body shall cure a sin-sick soul: O then instead of murmuring and being discontented, *bless the Lord*, hadst thou not met with such a rub in the way, thou mightest have gone to hell and never stopp'd.

SECT. VII.

The Seventh Argument to Contentment.

The next Argument to Contentment is, consider the evil of discontent. Male-content hath a mixture

mixture of grief and anger in it, and both these must needs raise a storm in the soul. Have you not seen the posture of a sick man? sometimes he will sit upon his bed, by and by he will lie down, and when he is down, he is not quiet; first he turns on one side, and then on the other, he is restless: this is just the emblem of a discontented spirit, the man is not sick, yet he is never well; sometimes he likes such a condition of life, and when he hath it, yet he is not pleased, he is soon weary; and then another condition of life: this is *an evil under the Sun.*

Now the end of Discontent appears in three things.

1. The *sordidness* of it, it is unworthy of a Christian.

First, It is unworthy of his profession. It was the saying of an Heathen, Bear thy condition quietly, *Nosce te esse hominem*, Know thou art *a man*. So I say, Bear thy condition contentedly, *Nosce te esse Christianum*, Know thou art *a Christian*. Thou professest to live by faith; what, and not content? Faith is a grace that doth substantiate *things not seen*, Heb. 11. 1. Faith looks beyond the creature, it feeds upon promises, faith lives not *by bread alone*. When the water is spent in the *bottle*, faith knows whither to have recourse; now to see a Christian dejected in the want of visible supplies and recruits, where is faith? Oh, faith one, my estate in the world is down, and, and which is worse, thy faith is down. Wilt thou not be contented, unless God let down the vessel to thee, as he did to *Peter*, wherein were all manner of *beasts of the earth, and fowls of the air?* Act. 10. 12. Must you have first and second course? This is like *Thomas*, *Unless I put my finger into the print of the nails, I will*

not

not believe; Joh. 20. 25. So, unless thou hast a sensible feeling of outward comforts, thou wilt not be content. True faith will *trust* God where it cannot *trace* him, and will adventure upon Gods *bond* though it hath nothing in view. You who are discontented because you have not all you would, let me tell you either your faith is a *non entity*, or at best but an *embrio*; 'tis a *weak faith* that must have stilts and crutches to support it. Nay, discontent is not only below faith, but below reason; why are you discontented? is it because you are dispossessed of such comforts? well, and have you not reason to guid you? doth not reason tell you that you are but *tenants at will*? and may not God then you out when he please? You hold not your estate *jure*, but *gratis*; not by a juridical right, but upon favour and courtesie.

2. It is unworthy of the *relation* we stand in to God; a Christian is invested with the title and priviledge of *Sonship*, Eph. 1. 5. he is an heir of the promise: Oh consider the lot of free-grace is fallen upon thee, thou art neerly allied to Christ, and of the blood royal; thou art advanced, in some sense, above the Angels; *why then art thou, being the Kings Son, lean from day to day*? 2 Sam. 13. 4. Why art thou discontented? Oh how unworthy is this? as if the heir to some great Monarch should go pining up and down, because he may not pick such a flower.

2. Consider the *sinfulness* of it, which appears in three things,

The Causes
The Concomitants } of it.
The Consequences

1. It is sinful in the *Causes*; which are these:

1. *Pride.*

1. *Pride.* He that thinks highly of his deserts, usually esteems meanly of his condition; a discontented man is a proud man, he thinks himself *better* than others; therefore finds fault with the wisdom of God, that he is not *above* others. Thus the thing *formed* saith to him that *formed* it, *Why hast thou made me thus?* Rom. 9. 20. Why am I not higher? Discontents are nothing else but the aestuations and boilings over of pride.

2. The second cause of Discontent is Envy, which *Augustine* calls *Vitium Diabolicum*, the Sin of the Devil; Satan envied *Adam* the glory of *Paradise*, and the robe of Innocency: he that envies what his neighbour hath, is never contented with that portion which Gods providence doth parcel out to him; as envy stirs up *strife* (this made the Plebeian faction so strong among the Romans) so it creates *discontent*; the envious man looks so much upon the blessings which another enjoys, that he cannot see his own mercies; and so doth continually vex and torture himself. *Cain* envied that his brothers sacrifice was accepted; and his rejected, hereupon he was discontented, and presently murderous thoughts began to arise in his heart.

3. The third cause is *Covetousness*. This is a radical sin. Whence are vexing Law suits, but from Discontent? and whence is Discontent, but from Covetousness? *Covetousness* and *Contentedness* cannot dwell in the same heart. *Avarice* is an *helluo*, that is never satisfied. The covetous man is like *Behemoth*; *behold, he drinketh up a river, he trusteth that he can draw up* Jordan *into his mouth*, Job 40. 23. There are four things (saith *Solomon*) say, *It is not enough.* I may adde a fifth, *The heart of a covetous man*, he is still craving. Covetousness is like a Wolf in the breast, which is ever

ever feeding; and because a man is not satisfied, he is never content.

4. The fourth cause of Discontent is *Jealousie*, which is sometimes occasion'd through melancholy, and sometimes misapprehension. The spirit of Jealousie casteth *this evil spirit*. Jealousie *is the rage of man*, Prov. 6. 34. and oft, this is nothing but *suspicion* and *phancy*; yet such as creates real discontent.

5. The fifth cause of Discontent is *Distrust*, which is a great degree of Atheisme. The discontented person is ever distrustful. *The bill of provision* grows low; I am in these straits and exigencies, can God help me? *Can he prepare a Table in the wilderness?* sure he cannot. My estate is exhausted, can God recruit me? My friends are gone, can God raise me up more? sure the arm of his power is shrunk. I am like the *dry fleece*, can any water come upon this fleece? *If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?* 1 King. 7. 2. Thus *the Anchor of hope*, and *the shield of faith* being cast away, the soul goes pining up and down.

Discontent is nothing else, but the *Ecchо* of unbelief; and remember *Distrust* is worse than *Distress*.

2. Discontent is evil in the Concomitants of it, which are two.

1. Discontent is joyned with a *sullen melancholy*; A Christian of a right temper, should be ever chearful in God; *Serve the Lord with gladness*, Psal. 100. 2. A sign the oyl of grace hath been poured into the heart, when *the oyl of gladness* shines in the countenance. Chearfulness credits Religion how can the discontented person be chearful? Discontent is a dogged, sullen humour; because we

have

have not what we desire, God shall not have a good word or look from us; as the Bird in the cage; because she is pent up, and cannot flie in the open air, therefore beats her self against the cage, and is ready to kill her self. Thus that pievish prophet, *I do well to be angry to the death*; Jonah 4. 2. Discontent is accompanied with *Unthankfulness*; because we have not all we desire, we never mind the mercies which we have: we deal with God as the widow of *Sarepta* did with the prophet; the Prophet *Elijah* had been a means to keep her alive in the famine; for it was for his sake, that her *meal in the barrel* and her *oyl in the cruse* failed not; but as soon as ever her son dies, she falls into a passion, and begins to quarrel with the Prophet, *What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?* 1 King. 17. 18. So unthankfully do we deal with God: we can be content to receive mercies from God, but if he doth cross us in the least thing, then through discontent, we grow testy and impatient, and are ready to fly upon God; Thus God loseth all his Mercies. We read in Scriptures of the *thank-offering*, 2 Chron. 29. 30. The discontented person cuts God short of this; the Lord loseth his *thank-offering*. A discontented Christian repines in the midst of mercies, as *Adam*, who sin'd in the midst of *Paradise*. Discontent is a Spider, that sucks the poison of unthankfulness out of the sweetest flower of Gods blessings; and by a deviliish Chimistry, extracts dross out of the most refined Gold. The discontented person thinks every thing he doth for God too much, and every thing God doth for him too little. O what a sin is unthankfulness! it is an accumulative sin, What *Cicero* said of *Parricide*,

cide, I may say of *Ingratitude*; there are many sins bound up in this one sin; it is a voluminous wickedness; and how full of this sin is *Discontent*? A discontented Christian, because he hath not all he would, therefore dishonours God with the mercies which he hath. God made *Eve* out of *Adam's* rib, to be an *helper* (as the Father speaks) but the Devil made an arrow of this rib, and shot *Adam* to the heart: So doth discontent take the rib of Gods mercy and ungratefully shoot at him; Estate, Liberty, shall be employed against God. Thus it is oftentimes. Behold then how Discontent and Ingratitude are interwoven and twisted one within another: thus discontent is sinful in its Concomitants.

3. It is sinful in its *Consequences*, which are these;

1. It makes a man very unlike the Spirit of God. The spirit of God is a *meek Spirit*. The Holy Ghost descended in the likeness of a *Dove*; A Dove is the emblem of meekness; a discontented spirit is not a meek spirit.

2. It makes a man like the Devil. The Devil being swell'd with the poison of envy and malice, is never content: Just so is the Male-content. The Devil is an unquiet spirit, he is still *walking about*, 1 Pet. 5 8. tis his rest to be walking. And herein is the discontented person like him; for he goes up and down vexing himself, *Seeking rest and finding none*; he is the Devils picture.

3. Discontent disjoynts the soul, it untunes the heart for duty; *Is any man afflicted let him pray*; Jam. 5. 13. But, is any man *discontented?* how shall he pray? *Lift up pure hands without wrath*, 1 Tim 5. 8. Discontent is full of wrath and passion; The Male-content cannot lift up pure hands; he lifts up *leprous hands*, he poisons his prayers;

will

will God accept of a poison'd sacrifice? *Chrysostome* compares prayer to a fine Garland; Those, saith he, that make a Garland, their hands had need be clean; Prayer is a precious Garland; the heart that makes it had need be clean: Discontent throws poison into the spring (which was death among the Romans;) Discontent puts the heart into a disorder and mutiny, and such a one cannot serve the Lord *without distraction*.

4. Discontent sometimes unfits for the very use of reason; *Jonah* in a passion of discontent, spake no better than blasphemy and non-sense; *I do well, saith he, to be angry to the death*, Jonah 4. 8. What? to be angry with God? and to die for anger? sure he did not know well what he said. When Discontent transports, then like *Moses*, we speak *unadvisedly with our lips*. This humour doth even suspend the very acts of reason.

5. Discontent doth not only disquiet a mans self, but those who are neer him. This evil spirit troubles *Families*, *Parishes*, &c. If there be but one string out of tune, it spoils all the musick. One discontented spirit makes jarrings and discords among others. 'Tis this ill humour that breeds quarrels and Law-suits. Whence is all our *Contention*, but for want of *Contentation*? From whence *come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?* Jam. 4. 1. in particular from this *lust* of Discontent? Why did *Absalom* raise a war against his Father, and would have taken off not only his *Crown*, but his *Head*? was it not his discontent? *Absalom* would be King. Why did *Ahab* stone *Naboth*? was it not discontent about the Vineyard? Oh this Devil of Discontent! Thus you have seen the sinfulness of it.

3. Consider the simplicity of it. I may say as the Psalmist, *Surely they are disquieted in vain*, Psal. 39. 6. which appears thus,

2. Is it not a vain simple thing to be troubled at the loss of that which is in its own nature perishing and changeable? God hath put a vicissitude into the creature; all the world rings changes; and for me to meet with inconstancy here, to lose a friend, estate, to be in a constant fluctuation, is no more then to see a flower wither, or a leaf drop off in *Autumn*. There is an *Autumn* upon every comfort, a *fall of the leaf*; Now it is extream folly to be discontented at the loss of those things which are in their own nature loseable. What *Solomon* saith of *Riches*, is true of all things under the Sun, *They take wings*. *Noah*'s Dove brought an Olive-branch in its mouth; but presently flew out of the Ark, and never returned more: Such a comfort brings to us honey in its mouth, but it hath wings; and to what purpose should we be troubled, unless we had wings to flie after and overtake it?

2. Discontent is an heart-breaking; *by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken*, Prov. 15. 13. it takes away the comfort of life. There is none of us but have many mercies if we can see them; now because we have not all we desire, therefore we will lose the comfort of that which we have already. *Jonah* having his Gourd smitten (a withering vanity) was so discontented, that he never thought of his miraculous deliverance out of the Whales belly; he takes no comfort of his life, but wisheth that he might die. What folly is this? we must have all or none; herein we are like children, that throw away the piece which is cut them, because they may have no bigger. Discontent

eats

eats out the comfort of life. Besides, it were well, if it were seriously weighed how prejudicial this is, even to our health: For discontent, as it doth discruciate the mind, so it doth pine the body; it frets as a moth, and by wasting the spirits, weakens the vitals; The pleurisie of Discontent brings the body into a Consumption; and is not this Folly?

3. Discontent does not ease us of our burden, but makes the Cross heavier. A contented spirit goes chearfully under its affliction. Discontent makes our grief as unsupportable, as it is unreasonable. If the leg be well, it can endure a fetter, and not complain; but if the leg be sore, then the fetter troubles. Discontent of mind is the sore that makes the fetters of affliction more grievous. Discontent troubles us more than the trouble it self, it steeps the affliction in wormwood. When Christ was upon the Cross, the Jews brought him *gall* and *vinegar* to drink, that it might adde to his sorrow. Discontent brings to a man in affliction gall and vinegar to drink; this is worse than the affliction it self. Is it not folly for a man to imbitter his own Cross?

4. Discontent spins out our troubles the longer. A Christian is discontented because he is in want; and therefore he is in want, because he is discontented; he murmurs because he is afflicted, and therefore he is afflicted, because he murmurs. Discontent doth delay and adjourn our mercies. God deals herein with us as we use to do with our children; when they are quiet and chearful, they shall have any thing; but if we see them cry and fret, then we with-hold from them: We get nothing from God by our discontent, but blows. The more the child struggles, the more

it is beaten: When we struggle with God by our sinful passions, he doubles and trebles his stroaks; God will tame our curst hearts. What got *Israel* by their peevishness? they were within eleven days journey of *Canaan*, and now they were discontented, and began to murmur; God leads them a march of forty years long in the wilderness. Is it not folly for us to adjourn our own mercies? Thus you have seen the evil of discontent. I have been long upon this Argument, but *nunquam nimis dicitur, quod nunquam satis dicitur.*

SECT. VIII.

The Eighth Argument to Contentation.

The next Argument or Motive to Contentment is this; why is not a man content with the competency which he hath? perhaps if he had more, he would be less content; covetousness is a dry drunkenness. The world is such, that the more we *have*, the more we *crave*; it cannot fill the heart of man. When the fire burns, how do you quench it? not by pouring oyl on the flame, or laying on more wood, but by with-drawing the fuel. When the appetite is enflam'd after riches, how may a man be satisfied? not by having just what he desires, but by with-drawing the *fuel &c.* moderating and lessening his desires. He that is contented, hath enough. A man in a fever or dropsie, thirsts, how do you satisfie him? not by giving him liquid things, which will inflame his thirst the more, but by removing the cause, and so curing his distemper. The way for a man

to be contented, is not by raising his estate higher, but by bringing his heart lower.

SECT. IX.

The Ninth Argument to Contentation.

The next Argument to Contentment is, *The shortness of life.* It is but a *vapour*, saith *James*; Jam. 4. 14. life is a wheel ever running. The Poets painted Time with wings, to shew the volubility and swiftness of it. *Job* compares it to a *swift Post*, Job. 9. 25. (our life rides post) and to a *day*, not a *year*. It is indeed like a *day*. Infancy is as it were the *day-break*, *Youth* is the Sun-rising, *full growth* is the Sun in the Meridian, *Old age* is Sun-setting. *Sickness* is the *Evening*, then comes the *Night* of Death. How quickly is this day of life spent? often times this Sun goes down at noon-day; life ends before the evening of old age comes; Nay, sometimes the Sun of life sets presently after Sun-rising. Quickly after the dawning of Infancy, the night of death approaches. Oh, how short is the life of man! The consideration of the brevity of life may work the heart to contentment. Remember thou art to be here but a day; *parum viæ, quid multum viatici?* thou hast but a short way to go, and what needs a long provision for a short way? If a traveller hath but enough to bring him to his journeys end, he desires no more. We have but a day to live, and perhaps we may be in the twelfth hour of the day; why, if God give us but enough to bear our charges till night, it is sufficient. Let us be content. If a man had the lease of an house or farm, but for two

or

or three days, and he should fall a building and planting; would he not be judged very indiscreet? So when we have but a short time here, and death calls us presently off the stage, to thirst immoderately after the world, and pull down our souls, to build up an estate, is it not extream folly? Therefore as *Esau* said once in a *profane sense*, concerning his birth-right, *Lo, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?* So let a Christian say in a *Religious sense*; Lo, I am even at the point of death, my grave it going to be made, and what good will the world do me? If I have but enough till *Sun-setting*, I am content.

SECT. K.

The Tenth Argument to Contentation.

The tenth Argument or Motive to Contentment is, Consider seriously the nature of a prosperous condition. There are in a prosperous estate three things:

1. *Plus molestiæ*, more trouble. Many who have abundance of all things to enjoy, yet have not so much content and sweetness in their lives, lives, as some that go to their hard labour. Sad solicitous thoughts do often attend a prosperous condition. *Care* is the *malus genius*, or evil spirit which haunts the rich man, and will not suffer him to be quiet. When his chest is full of gold, his heart is full of care, either how to *manage*, or how to *increase*, or how to *secure* what he hath gotten. Oh the troubles and perplexities that do wait upon prosperity! The worlds high seats are very uneasie;

eaſie; Sun-ſhine is pleaſant, but ſometimes it ſcorcheth with its heat: The Bee gives honey, but ſometimes it ſtings. Proſperity hath its ſweetneſs, and alſo its ſting. *Competency with Contentment is far more eligible.* Never did *Jacob* ſleep better than when he had the heavens for his Canopy, and an hard ſtone for his pillow. A large voluminous eſtate is but like a long trailing garment, which is more troubleſome than uſeful.

2. In a proſperous condition there is *plus periculi*, more danger, and that two ways.

Firſt, *Ex parte ipſius*, in reſpect of a mans ſelf. The rich mans *Table is oft his ſnare*; he is ready to ingulph himſelf too deep in theſe ſweet waters. In this ſenſe it his hard to know how to *abound*. It muſt be a ſtrong brain that bears heady wine; he had need have much wiſdom and grace, that knows how to bear an high condition; either he is ready to kill himſelf with care, or ſurfet himſelf upon luſcious delights. Oh the hazard of *honour*, the damage of dignity! Pride, ſecurity, rebellion, are the three worms that breed of plenty, *Deut.* 32. 15. The paſtures of proſperity are rank and ſurfetting. How ſoon are we broken upon the ſoft pillow of eaſe? Proſperity is often a *trumpet* that ſounds a *retreat*, it calls men off from the purſuit of Religion. The Sun of Proſperity oft dulls and puts out the fire of zeal. How many ſouls hath the *pleuriſie* of *abundance* kill'd? They that *will be rich*, fall into ſnares, 1 Tim. 6. 10. The world is bird-lime at our feet, it is full of *golden ſands*, but they are *quick-ſands*. Proſperity, like ſmooth *Jacob*, will ſupplant and betray; a great eſtate without much vigilancy, will be a thief to rob us of heaven; ſuch as are upon the pinacle of honour, are in moſt danger of falling. *Sæpius*

Sæpius ventis agitatur ingens
Pinus, & celsæ graviore casu
Decidunt turres, feriuntque summos
Fulmina montes, &c.

Hor. *carm.* l. 2. *ode* 10.

A lower estate is less hazardous. The little Pinnace rides safe by the Shore, when the gallant Ship advancing with its mast and top-sail, is cast away. *Homo victus in Paradiso, victor in stercore.* Adam in Paradise was overcome; when Job on the dunghill was a conquerour. Samson fell asleep on Dalilah's lap: Some have fallen so asleep on the lap of ease and plenty, that they have never awaked till they have been in hell. The worlds *fawning* is worse than its *frowning*; and it is more to be feared when it smiles, than when it thunders. Prosperity in Scripture is compared to a candle, Job 29. 3. *When his candle shined upon my head.* How many have burnt their wings about this candle! *Segetem uberiùs nimia sternit, rami onere franguntur, ad maturitatem non pervenit nimia facunditas:* The corn being over-ripe sheds, and fruit when it mellows, begins to rot; When men do mellow with the Sun of Prosperity, commonly their souls begin to rot in sin. *How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?* Luk 18. 24. His golden weights keep him from ascending up *the hill of* God; and shall we not be content, though we are placed in a lower Orb? What if we are not in so much bravery and gallantry as others? we are not in so much danger; as we want the honour of the world, so the temptations. Oh the abundance of danger that is

abundance! We see by common experience, that *Lunaticks*, when the Moon is declining and in the wane, are sober enough; but when it is in the full, they are more wild and exorbitant: When mens estates are in the wane, they are more serious about their souls, more humble; but when it is the *Full of the Moon*, and they have abundance, then their hearts begin to swell with their estates, and are scarce themselves. Those that write concerning the several *Climates*, observe, that such as live in the Northern parts of the world, if you bring them into the South part, they lose their stomacks, and die quickly; but those that live in the more Southern hot Climates, bring them into the North, and their stomacks mend, and they are long lived: Give me leave to apply it, bring a man from the cold starving climate of Poverty, into the hot Southern climate of prosperity, and he begins to lose his appetite to good things, he grows weak, and a thousand to one if all his Religion doth not die; but bring a Christian from the South to the North, from a rich flourishing estate into a jejune low condition, let him come into a more cold and hungry air, and then his stomack mends, he hath better appetite after heavenly things, he hungers more after Christ; he thirsts more for grace, he eats more at one meal of the bread of life than at six before; this man is now like to live and hold out in his Religion; be content then with a *modicum*, if you have but enough to pay for your passage to heaven, it sufficeth.

2. A prosperous Condition is dangerous *ex parte vicini*, in regard of others: A great Estate for the most part draws Envy to it, Gen. 26. 12, 13, 14. whereas *in parvis quies*. *David a Shepherd* was quiet; but *David a Courtier* was pursued

sued by his Enemies: Envy cannot endure a Superiour; an envious Man knows not how to live but upon the Ruine of his Neighbour; he raiseth himself higher by bringing others lower. Prosperity is an Eye-sore to many. Such Sheep as have most Wooll are sooneſt fleec'd. The barren Tree grows peaceably; no Man meddles with the Ash or Willow, but the Apple-tree and Damasin shall have many rude Suitors. Oh then be content to carry a lesser Sail; he that hath less *Revenues*, hath less *Envy*; such as bear the faireſt Frontispiece, and make the greateſt Shew in the World, are the *White* for Envy and Malice to shoot at.

3. A prosperous Condition hath in it *plus recensionis*, a greater Reckoning; every Man must be responsible for his Talents. Thou that haſt great Possessions in the World, doſt thou trade thy Estate for God's Glory? Art thou *rich in good works*? πολὺν ἀγαθὸν? Grace makes a *private person* a *common good*. Doſt thou disburse thy Money for publick Uses? It is lawful (in this Sense) to put out our Money to use. Oh let us all remember an Estate is a *Depositum*: we are but Stewards, and our Lord and Master will ere long say, *Give an Account of your Stewardship*: the greater our *Estate*, the greater our *Charge*; the more our Revenues, the more our Reckonings. You that have a lesser Mill going in the World, be content, God will expect less from you, where he hath sowed more sparingly.

SECT

SECT. XI.

The Eleventh Argument to Contentation.

The Eleventh Argument is the Example of those who have been eminent for Contentation. *Examples* are usually more forcible than *Precepts*. *Abraham* being call'd out to hot Service, and such as was against Flesh and Blood, was content. God bids him offer up his Son *Isaac*, Gen. 22. 2. this was a great Work: *Isaac* was *filius senectutis*, the Son of his old Age; *filius dilectionis*, the Son of his Love; *filius promissi*, the Son of the Promise; Christ the Messiah was to come of his Line, *in Isaac shall thy seed be blessed*; so that to offer up *Isaac* seem'd not only to oppose *Abrahams* Reason, but his Faith too; for if *Isaac* die, the World (for ought he knew) must be without a Mediator. Besides, if *Isaac* be sacrificed, was there no other hand to do it but *Abrahams*? must the Father needs be the Executioner? must he that was the Instrument of giving *Isaac* his being, be the Instrument of taking it away? yet *Abraham* doth not dispute or debate, but believes *against Hope*, and is content with God's Prescription. So, when God call'd him to *leave his Country*, Heb. 11. 8. he was content. Some would have argued thus: What? leave all my Friends, my native Soil, my brave Situation, and go turn Pilgrim? *Abraham* is content: besides, *Abraham* went blindfold, *he knew not whither he went*, Verse 8. God held him in Suspense, he must go wander he knows not where; and when he doth come to the Place God had laid out for him, he knows not what Oppo-

sition he shall meet with there; the World doth seldom cast a favourable Aspect upon Strangers, *Gen.* 31. 15. yet he is content, and obeys; *He sojourned in the Land of Promise*, Heb. 11. 9. Behold a little his Pilgrimage. First, he goes to *Charran* a City in *Mesopotamia*; when he had sojourned there a while, his Father dies; then he removes to *Sichem*, then to *Bethlem* in *Canaan*; *there* a Famine ariseth, *then* he went down to *Egypt*, after that he returns into *Canaan*; when he came there ('tis true, he had a Promise) but he found nothing to answer Expectation; he had not there one Foot of Land, but was an Exile: in this time of his sojourning he buried his Wife; and as for his dwellings he had no sumptuous Buildings, but led his Life in poor Cottages: all this was enough to have broken any mans Heart. *Abraham* might think thus with himself; is this the Land I must possess? here is no probability of any Good; *all things are against me*: well, is he discontented? no, God saith to him, *Abraham* go, leave thy Countrey; and this Word was enough to lead him all the World over, he is presently upon his March; here was a man had learned to be content. But let us descend a little lower, to Heathens. *Zeno* (of whom *Seneca* speaks) who had once been very rich, hearing of a Shipwrack, and that all his Goods were drowned at Sea, *Fortune* saith he (he spake in an Heathen Dialect) *hath dealt well with me, and would have me now to study Philosophy*: He was content to change his Course of Life, to leave off being a Merchant, and turn Philosopher. And if an Heathen said thus, shall not a Christian much more say, when the World is strained from him, *Juber Deus mundum deridere & Christum expeditius sequi*, God would have

me leave off following the World, and study Christ more, and how to get to Heaven. Do I see a Heathen contented, and a Christian disquieted? How did Heathens vilifie those things which Christians magnifie? though they knew not God or what true Happiness meant; yet would speak very sublimely of a *Numen* or Deity, and of the Life to come, as *Aristotle* and *Plato*; and for those Elisian Delights which they did but Phansie, they undervalued and contemned the things here below; it was the Doctrine they taught their Scholars, and which some of them practised, that *Man should strive to be contented with a little*; they were willing to make an Exchange; to have less Gold and more Learning: and shall not we be content then to have less of the World, so we may have more of Christ? May not Christians blush to see Heathens content with a *viaticum*, so much as would recruit Nature; and to see themselves so transported with the Love of earthly things? That if they begin a little to abate, and the *Bill of Provision* grows short, they murmur, and are like *Micah*, *Ye have taken away my gods, and do ye ask me what I ail?* Judg. 18. 24. Have Heathens gone so far in Contentation, and is it not sad for us to come short of them that came short of Heaven? These *Heroes* of their Time, how did they embrace Death it self? *Socrates* died in Prison; *Hercules* was burnt alive, *Cato* (whom *Seneca* calls the lively Image and Portracture of Vertue) thrust through with a Sword; but how bravely, and with what Contentment of Spirit did they die? *Shall I*, saith Seneca, *weep for Cato, or Regulus, or the rest of those Worthies that died with so much Valour and Patience?* Did not cross Providence make them to alter

their Countenance? and do I see a Christian appalled and amazed? Did not Death affright them? and doth it distract us? did the Spring-head of Nature rise so high? and shall not Grace, like the *Waters of the Sanctuary* rise higher? We that pretend to live by Faith, may we not go to School to them who had no other Pilot but Reason to guide them? Nay, let me come a step lower, to creatures void of Reason; we see every Creature is contented with its Allowance; the Beasts with their Provender, the Birds with their Nests, they live only upon Providence, and shall we make our selves below them? Let a Christian go to School to the Ox and the Ass, to learn contentedness; we think we never have enough, and are still laying up; the Fowls of the Air do not lay up, *they reap not, nor gather into barns*; Mat. 6. 26. It is an Argument which Christ brings to make Christians contented with their condition. The Birds do not lay up, yet they are provided for, and are contented; *Are ye not* (saith Christ) *much better than they*? but if you are discontented, are ye not much worse than they? let these Examples quicken us.

SECT. XII.

The Twelfth Argument to Contentation.

The Twelfth Argument to Contentation is whatever Change or Trouble a Child of God meets with, it is all the Hell he shall have. Whatever Eclipse may be upon his Name or Estate; I may say of it as *Athanasius* of his Banishment, it is *nubicula cito transitura*, a little Cloud which will

soon be blown over; and then his Gulf is short, his Hell is past.

Albus ut obscuro deterget nubila cœlo
Sæpe Notus, neq; parturit imbres
Perpetuos sic tu Sapiens finire memento
Tristitiam. Hor. *Ode* 7. *l.* 1.

Death begins a wicked Mans Hell, but it puts an End to a godly Mans Hell. Think with thy self, what if I endure this? it is but a *temporary Hell*; indeed if all our Hell be here it is but an easie Hell. What is the Cup of Affliction to the Cup of Damnation? *Lazarus* could not get a Crumb; he was so diseased that the Dogs took pity on him, and (as it is if they had been his Physicians) *licked his sores*; but this was an easie Hell; the *Angels* quickly fetched him out of it. If all our Hell be in this Life, in the midst of this Hell we may have the Love of God, and then it is no more *Hell*, but *Paradise*. If our Hell be here, we may see the *bottom* of it, it is but *Skin deep*, it cannot touch the Soul, and we may see the *end* of it: 'Tis an Hell that is short-liv'd: After a wet Night of Affliction comes a bright Morning of the Resurrection; if our Lives be short, our Trials can't be long. As our *Riches* take *Wings* and *fly*, so do our *sufferings*; then let us be contented.

SECT. XIII.

The Thirteenth Argument to Contentation.

The last Argument to Contentment is this, To have a *Competency*, and to want *Contentment*, is

a great Judgment. For a Man to have an huge Stomack, that what ever Meat you give him he is ſtill craving, and never ſatisfied; you uſe to ſay, this is a great Judgment upon the Man: Thou who art *bebo pecunia*, a Devourer of Money, and yet never haſt enough, but ſtill crieſt, *Give, give*, this is a ſad Judgment; *They ſhall eat and not have enough*, Hoſ. 4. 10. The Throat of a malicious Man is an open *Sepulchre*, Rom. 3. 13. ſo is the Heart of a covetous Man. Covetouſneſs is not only *malum culpæ*, but *malum pœnæ*; it is not only a *Sin*, but the *Puniſhment* of a Sin. 'Tis a ſecret Curſe upon a covetous Perſon, he ſhall thirſt, and thirſt, and never be ſatisfied; *He that loveth Silver, ſhall not be ſatisfied with Silver*, Eccl. 5. 10. and is not this a Curſe? What was it but a ſevere Judgment upon the People of *Judah*? *Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink*; Hag. 1. 6. Oh let us take heed of this *Plague*. Did *Eſau* ſay to his Brother, I have *abundance*, my brother, Gen. 33. 9. or as we tranſlate it, *I have enough*? and ſhall not a Chriſtian ſay ſo much more? 'Tis ſad that our Hearts ſhould be ſo dead to heavenly Things, and as a Spunge to ſuck in earthly. Let all that hath been ſaid, work our Minds to holy Contentation.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Three Things to be inserted by way of Caution.

IN the next place I come to lay down some necessary Cautions: though (I say) a Man should be contented in every Estate; yet there are three Estates in which he must not be contented.

1. He must not be contented in a *natural Estate*; here he must learn not to be content. A Sinner in his pure Naturals is under *the Wrath of God*, John 3. 16. and shall he be content when that dreadful Vial is going to be poured out? is it nothing to be under the Scorchings of divine Fury? *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* A Sinner as a Sinner, is *under the Power of Satan*, Act. 26. 18. and shall he in *this Estate* be contented to stay in the Enemies quarters? While we sleep in the Lap of Sin, the Devil doth to us as the *Philistines* did to *Sampson*, cut the Lock of our Strength, and put out our Eyes; 1 Cor. 4. 4. Be not content, O Sinner, in this Estate. For a Man to be in Debt Body and Soul, in fear every Hour to be arrested and carried Prisoner to Hell, shall he now be content? here I preach against Contentation. Oh get out of this Condition, I would hasten you out of it, as the Angel hastened *Lot* out of *Sodom*, Gen. 19. 15. there is a Smell of Fire and Brimstone upon you. The longer a Man stays in his Sin, the more Sin doth strengthen, *Heb.* 3. 13. 'tis hard to get out of Sin, when the Heart as a Garrison is victualled and fortified. A young Plant is easily removed; but when the Tree is

once

once rooted, there is no ſtirring of it: thou who art rooted in thy Pride, Unbelief, Impenitency, it will coſt thee many a ſad Pull ere thou art plucked out of thy *natural Eſtate*, Jer. 6. 16. 'Tis an hard thing to have a brazen Face and a broken Heart, *He travelleth with Iniquity*, Pſal. 7. 14. Be aſſured, the longer you travel with your Sins, the more and the ſharper Pangs muſt you expect in the *new Birth*. Oh be not contented with your natural Eſtate. *David* ſaith, *Why art thou diſquieted, O my ſoul?* Pſal. 4 53. but a Sinner ſhould ſay to himſelf, Why art thou not diſquieted O my Soul; why is it that thou layeſt Afflictions ſo to Heart, and canſt not lay Sin to heart? 'Tis a Mercy when we are diſquieted about Sin; a Man had better be at the Trouble of ſetting a Bone, than to be lame and in Pain all his Life; bleſſed is the Trouble that brings the Soul to Chriſt. 'Tis one of the worſt Sights to ſee a bad Conſcience quiet; of the two, better is a Fever than a Lethargy. I wonder to ſee a man in his natural Eſtate content; what? content to go to Hell?

2. Though in regard to Externals a Man ſhould be in every ſtate content, yet he muſt not be content in ſuch a Condition wherein God is apparently diſhonoured. If a Mans Trade be ſuch that he can hardly uſe it, but he muſt treſpaſs upon a Command (and ſo *make a Trade of Sin*) he muſt not content himſelf in ſuch a Condition; God never called any Man to ſuch a Calling as is ſinful, a Man in this Caſe had better knock off, and divert; better loſe ſome of his Gain, ſo he may leſſen ſome of his Guilt. So for Servants that live in a *profane Family* (the Suburbs of Hell) where the Name of God is not called upon,

upon, unless when it is taken in vain; they are not to content themselves in such a Place, they are to come *out of the Tents of these Sinners*; there is a double Danger of living among the Profane.

1. Lest we come to be infected with the Poison of their ill Example. *Joseph* living in *Pharaohs* Court, had learned to *swear by the Life of Pharaoh*, Gen. 42. 15. We are prone to suck in Example; Men take in deeper Impressions by the *Eye* than by the *Ear*. *Dives* was a bad Pattern, and he had many Brethren that seeing him sin, trod just in his Steps; therefore saith he, I pray thee send him *to my Fathers House*, *for I have five Brethren, that he may testifie to them, that they come not into this place of Torment*, Luk. 16. 27, 28. *Dives* knew which way they went; it is easie to catch a Disease from another, but not to catch Health. The Bad will sooner *corrupt* the Good than the Good will *convert* the Bad; take an equal Quantity and Proportion, so much sweet Wine with so much sowre Vineger, the Vineger will sooner sowre Wine than the Wine will sweeten the Vinegar. Sin is compared to the *Plague*, 1 Kings 8. 38. and to *Leaven*, 1 Cor. 5. 7. to shew of what a spreading Nature it is. A bad Master makes a bad Servant; *Jacobs* Cattle by looking on the Rods which were speckled and ring streaked, conceived like the Rods: We do as we see others *before* us, especially *above* us. If the Head be sick, the other Parts of the Body are distempered. If the Sun shine not upon the Mountains, it must needs set in the Valleys. We pray, *Lead us not into Temptation*; and do we lead our selves into Temptation? *Lot* was the Worlds Miracle, who kept himself fresh in *Sodoms* salt Water.

2. By

2. By living in an evil family, we are liable to incur their punishment; *Pour out thy wrath upon the families that call not upon thy Name*; Jer. 13. 25. For want of pouring out Prayer, the wrath of God was ready to be poured out. 'Tis dangerous living in the *Tents of Kedar*. When God sends his *flying roll*, written within and without with curses, it enters *into the house of the thief and perjurer, and it consumes the timber and the stones thereof*; Zech. 5. 4. Is it not of sad consequence to live in a profane perjur'd family; when the sin of the Governour pulls his house about his ears? if the stone and timber be destroyed, how shall the servant escape? And suppose God send not a *temporal roll* of curses in the family, there is a *spiritual roll*, and that is worse; *Prov.* 3. 33. Be not content to live where Religion dies. *Salute the brethren, and Nymphas, and the Church which is in his house*, Col. 4. 15. the house of the godly is a *little Church*, the house of the wicked a *little hell*, Prov 7. 27. Oh incorporate your selves into a religious family, the house of a good man is perfum'd with a blessing, *Prov.* 3. 33. When the holy oyl of grace is poured on the head, the *savour* of this ointment sweetly diffuseth it self, and the *vertue* of it runs down upon the skirts of the family. Pious examples are magnetical and forcible. *Seneca* said to his Sister, Though I leave you not wealth, yet I will leave you a good example. Let us ingraffe our selves among the Saints, by being often among the spices, we come to smell of them.

3. The third Caution is, though in every condition we must be content, yet we are not to content our selves with a *little grace*. Grace is the *best blessing*. Though we should be contented with

with a competency of estate, yet not with a competency of grace. It was the end of Christs Ascension to heaven, *to give gifts*; and the end of those gifts, *that we may grow up into him who is the head, Christ*; Eph. 4. 15. Where the Apostle distinguisheth between our *being* in Christ, and our *growing* in him; our ingrafting, and our flourishing: be not content with a *modicum* in Religion.

'Tis not enough that there be *life*, but there must be *fruit*. Barrenness in the Law was accounted a curse. The farther we are from fruit, the nearer we are to cursing; *Heb.* 6 8. 'Tis a sad thing when men are fruitful onely *in the unfruitfull works of darkness*. Be not content with a dram or two of grace; next to a *still-born*, a starveling in Christ is worst. Oh covet more grace, never think thou hast enough; it is *bona & honesta avaritia*; we are bid to *covet the best things*; 1 Cor. 12. it is an heavenly ambition, when we desire to be high in Gods favour; a blessed contention, when all the strife is, who shall be most holy. Saint *Paul*, though he was content with a little of the world, yet not with a little grace; he *reached forward* and *pressed towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*; Phil. 3. 13, 14. A true Christian is a *wonder*, he is the most contented, and yet the least satisfied: he is contented with a morsel of bread, and a little water in the Cruse, yet never satisfied with grace; he doth *anhelare*, pant and breath after more; this is his prayer; Lord, more conformity *to* Christ, more communion *with* Christ: he would fain have Christs image more lively pictured upon his soul. True grace is always progressive; as the Saints are called *Lamps* and *Stars* in regard of their *light*; so *trees of righte-*

righteousness; Isa. 61. 3. for their growth: they are indeed like the tree of life, bringing forth several sorts of fruit.

A true Christian grows, 1. *Forma, in beauty.* Grace is the best complexion of the soul; it is at the first plantation like *Rachel*, fair to look upon; but still the more it lives, the more it sends forth its rays of beauty. *Abrahams* faith was at first beautiful, but at last it did shine in its orient colours, and grew so illustrious, that God himself was in love with it, and makes his faith a pattern to all Believers.

2. A true Christian grows *Suavitate*, in sweetness. A poisonful weed may grow as much as the Hyssop, or Rosemary; the poppy in the field, as the Corn; the Crab as the Pearmain; but the one hath a harsh, sowre taste, the other mellows as it grows: An hypocrite may grow in outward dimensions, as much as a child of God; he may pray as much, profess as much; but he grows only in magnitude, he brings forth sowre grapes, his duties are leavened with pride; the other ripens as he grows, he grows in love, humility, faith, which do mellow and sweeten his duties, and make them come off with a better relish. The believer grows as the flower, he casts a fragrancy and perfume.

3. A true Christian grows *Robore*, in *strength*; he grows still more *rooted*, and *setled*. The more the tree grows, the more it spreads its root in the earth; *Col.* 2. 7. A Christian who is a Plant of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the longer he grows, the more he incorporates into Christ, and sucks spiritual juice and sap from him; he is a dwarf in regard of humility, but a gyant in regard of strength. He is strong to do duties, to bear burdens, to resist temptations. 4. He

4. He grows *Vigore*, in the *exercise of his grace*, he hath not only oil in his lamps, but his lamps are burning and shining. Grace is agil and dexterous. Christs Vines do flourish, *Cant.* 6. 11. Hence we read of a *lively hope*, 1 Pet. 1. 3. and a *fervent love*; 1 Pet. 1. 22. here is the activity of grace. Indeed sometimes grace is as a sleepy habit in the soul, like sap in the Vine, not exerting its vigour, which may be occasion'd through spiritual sloth; or by reason of falling into some sin; but this is only *pro tempore*, for a while; *the spring* of grace will come, the *flowers will appear*, and the *fig tree put forth her green figs*. The fresh gales of the Spirit do sweetly revive and refocillate grace. The Church of Christ, whose heart was a *garden*, and her graces as precious *spices*, prays for the heavenly breathings of the Spirit, that her sacred spices might flow out; *Cant.* 4. 16.

1. A true Christian grows *incremento*, both in the kind and in the degree of grace. To his spiritual *living* he gets an augmentation: he adds to *faith vertue*; to *vertue*, *knowledge*; to *knowledge*, *temperance*, &c. 2 Pet. 1. 6. here is grace growing in the *kind*; and he goes on *from faith to faith*, Rom. there is grace growing in the *degree*. *We are bound to give thanks to God for you brethren, because your faith groweth exceedingly*; 2 Thess. 1. it increaseth over and above. And the Apostle speaks of those spiritual plants which were laden with Gospel fruit, *Phil.* 1. 11. A Christian is compar'd to the *Vine* (an Emblem of fruitfulness) he must bear full clusters; We are bid to *perfect* that which is *lacking in our faith*, 1 Thess. 3. 10. A Christian must never be so old as to be past bearing; he brings forth fruit in *his old age*, Psal. 92. 14. An heaven-born

plant is ever growing; he never thinks he grows enough; he is not content unless he adde every day one cubit to his spiritual stature. We must not be content just with so much grace as will keep life and soul together; a dram or two must not suffice, but we must be still encreasing *with the increase of God*, Col. 2. 9. We had need *renew* our strength as the *Eagle*; Isa. 40. 31. our sins are renewed, our wants are renewed, our tentations are renewed, and shall not our *strength* be renewed? Oh be not content with the first *embryo* of grace, grace in its infancy and minority. You look for degrees of glory; be you Christians of degrees. Though a Believer should be contented with a *mediocrity* in his Estate, yet not with a *mediocrity* in Religion. A Christian of the right breed labours still to excel himself, and come nearer unto that holiness in God, who is the original, the pattern, and prototype of all holiness.

CHAP. XIII.

USE 4.

Shewing how a Christian may know whether he hath learned this Divine Art.

Use 4. THus having laid down these three Cautions, I proceed in the next place to an Use of Trial. 4. How may a Christian know that he hath learned this lesson of Contentment? I shall lay down some Characters by which you shall know it.

1. A Contented Spirit is a *silent spirit*. He hath not one word to say against God; I was *dumb* or *silent*, because *thou, Lord, didst it*, Psal. 39. Contentment silenceth all dispute; *He sitteth alone and keepeth silence*, Lam. 3 28. There is a *sinful* silence, when God is dishonoured his truth wounded, and men hold their peace; this silence is a loud sin: and there is an *holy* silence, when the soul sits down quiet and content with its condition: When *Samuel* tels *Eli* that heavy message from God, that he would *judge his house*, and that *the iniquity of his family should not be purged away with sacrifice for ever*; 1 Sam. 3 13. doth *Eli* murmur, or dispute? No, he hath not one word to say against God. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, ver. 18. A discontented spirit saith, as *Pharaoh*, *Who is the Lord?* why should I suffer all this? why should I be brought into this low condition? *Who is the Lord?* But a gracious heart saith as *Eli*, *It is the Lord*, let him do what he will with me. When *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the sons of *Aaron*, had offered up *strange fire*, and *fire went from the Lord, and devoured them*; Lev. 10. 1. is *Aaron* now in a passion of discontent? No, *Aaron held his peace*, ver. 3. A contented spirit is never angry, unless with himself for having hard thoughts of God. When *Jonah* said, *I do well to be angry*; this was not a contented spirit, it did not become a Prophet.

2. A contented spirit, *is a chearful spirit*; the Greeks call it *Euthumia* Contentment is something more than *Patience*; for Patience denotes onely submission, Contentment denotes *chearfulness*. A contented Christian is more than passive; he doth

not only *bear the Cross*, but *take up the Cross*; Matth. 6. 24. He looks upon God as a wise God; and whatever he doth, though it be not *ad voluntatem*, yet *ad sanitatem*; it is in order to a cure: Hence the contented Christian is chearful, and with the Apostle, *takes pleasure in infirmities, distresses, &c.* 2 Cor. 12. 10. He doth not only submit to Gods dealings, but rejoyce in them; he doth not only say, *Just is the Lord* in all that is befallen me; but *Good is the Lord.* This is to be contented. A sullen Melancholy is hatefull, it is said, God loves a *chearful giver*, 2 Cor. 9. 7. and God loves a *chearful liver*. We are bid in Scripture not to be *careful*, but we are no where bid not to be *chearful*. He that is contented with his condition, doth not abate of his spiritual joy, and indeed he hath that within him which is the ground of chearfulness; he carries a pardon sealed in his heart; *Mat.* 9. 2.

3. A contented spirit, is a *thankful spirit*; Job 1. 21. This is a degree above the other; *In every thing giving thanks*; 1 Thes. 5. A gracious heart spies mercy in every condition, therefore hath his heart strued up to thankfulness; others will bless God for prosperity, he blesseth him for affliction. Thus he reasons with himself, Am I in want? God sees it better for me to want then to abound; God is now dieting of me, he sees it better for my spiritual health, sometimes to be kept fasting; therefore he doth not only submit, but is thankfull. The malecontent is ever complaining of his condition; the contented spirit is ever giving thanks. Oh what height of grace is this! A contented heart is a *Temple* where the praises of God are sung forth, not a *Sepulchre* wherein they are buried.

buried. A contented Christian in the greatest straits hath his heart enlarged, and dilated in thankfulness. He oft contemplates Gods love in election, he sees that he is a *monument* of mercy, therefore desires to be a *pattern* of praise. There is always gratulatory musick in a contented soul; the Spirit of grace works in the heart like new wine, which under the heaviest pressures of sorrow, will have a vent open for thankfulness; this is to be content.

4. He that is content, no condition comes amiss to him; so it is in the Text, *in quocunque statu; in whatever state I am.* A contented Christian can, *prout res exigit*, turn himself to any thing; either want, or abound. The people of *Israel* knew neither how to abound, nor yet how to want; when they were in want, they murmured; *Can God prepare a Table in the wilderness?* and when they ate and were filled, then they lifted up the heel. *Paul* knew how to manage every estate; he could be either a note higher, or lower; he was (in this sense) an *Universalist*, he could do any thing that God would have him: If he were in prosperity, he knew how to be thankful; if in adversity, he knew how to be patient; he was neither lift up with the one, nor cast down with the other. He could carry a greater sail, or lesser; Thus a contented Christian knows how to turn himself to any condition. *Sicut bonus est dux & peritus, qui in quolibet exercitu ordinatur secundum exigentiam ejus; & coriarius, qui ex quolibet corio facit optimos sotulares; ita Christianus sapiens, qui scit quolibet statu bene se gerere.* We have those who can be contented *in some estate*, but not in every estate. They can be content in a

wealthy estate, when they have the streams of milk and honey; while Gods candle shines upon their head, now they are content; but if the wind turn and be against them, now they are discontented. While they have a silver crutch to lean upon, they are contented; but if God breaks this crutch, now they are discontented; but *Paul* had learned in every estate to carry himself with equanimity of mind; others would be content with their affliction, so God would give them leave to pick and chuse. They could be content to bear such a cross; they could better endure sickness then poverty, or bear loss of estate, than loss of children; if they might have such a mans cross, they could be content; any condition but the present: this is not to be content. A contented Christian doth not go to chuse his cross, but leaves God to chuse for him; he is content both for the *kind*, and for the *duration*. A contented spirit saith, Let God apply what medicine he pleaseth, and let it lie on as long as it will; I know when it hath done its cure, and eaten the venom of sin out of my heart, God will take it off again. In a word, a contented Christian, being sweetly captivated under the authority of the Word, desires to be wholly at Gods dispose, and is willing to live in that sphere and climate where God has set him; and if at any time he hath been an instrument of doing noble and brave service in the publick, he knows he is but a *reasonal tool*, a servant to authority, and is content to return to his former private condition of life. *Cincinnatus* after he had done worthily, and purchased to himself great fame in his Dictatorship, did notwithstanding afterwards voluntarily return to till and manure his four acres of ground. Thus should it be with Christians, professing

selling *Godliness with Contentment*, having served *Mars*, not daring to offend *Jupiter*; lest otherwise they discover only to the world a *brutish valour*, being so untam'd and head-strong, that when they have conquered others, yet they are not able to rule their own spirits.

5. He that is contented with his condition, to rid himself out of trouble will not run himself into sin. I deny not but a Christian may lawfully seek to change his condition, so far as Gods providence doth go before, he may follow, but when men will not follow providence, but run before it, as he said, *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* 2 King. 6. If God doth not open the door by his providence, they will break it open, and winde themselves out of affliction by sin; bringing their souls into trouble by bringing their estates out of trouble. This is far from holy Contentation, this is unbelief broken out into Rebellion. A contented Christian is willing to wait Gods leasure, and will not stir till God open a door. As *Paul* said in another case, *They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being* Romans, *and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out*; Acts 16. 37. So with reverence saith the contented Christian, God hath cast me into this condition; and though it be sad and troublesome, yet I will not stir, till God by a clear providence fetch me out. Thus those brave spirited Christians, *Heb.* 11. 35. *They accepted not deliverance*, that is, upon base dishonourable terms. They would rather stay in prison, then purchase their liberty by carnal complyance. *Estius* observes on the place, they might not only have had

had their enlargement, but been rais'd to honour, and put into offices of trust; yet the honour of Religion was dearer to them, then either liberty or honour. A contented Christian will not remove, till as the *Israelites*, he see a *pillar of cloud and fire* going before him: *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord*, Lam. 3. 26. 'Tis good to stay Gods leasure, and not to extricate our selves out of trouble, till we see the star of Gods Providence pointing out a way to us.

CHAP. XIV.

USE 5.

Containing a Christian Directory, or Rules about Contentment.

Use V. I Proceed now to an use of Direction, to shew Christians how they may attain to this *Divine Art of Contentation*. Certainly it is feasible; others of Gods Saints have reached to it. St. *Paul* here had it; and what do we think of those we read of in that little Book of Martyrs, *Heb.* 11. who had trials of *cruel mockings and scourgings*, who wandred about in *Deserts* and *Caves*, yet were contented; so that it is possible to be had. And here I shall lay down some Rules for holy Contentment.

SECT.

SECT. I.

1. Rule. *Advance Faith.*

All our disquiets do issue immediately from unbelief. 'Tis this that raiseth the storm of discontent in the heart. Oh set faith a work; 'tis the property of faith to silence our doubtings, to scatter our fears, to still the heart when the passions are up. Faith works the heart to a sweet, serene composure; 'tis not having *food* and *raiment*, but having *Faith* which will make us content. Faith chides down passion; When Reason begins to sink, let Faith swim.

Quest. How doth Faith work Contentment?

Answ. 1. Faith shews the soul, that whatever its trials are, yet it is from the hand of a Father; 'tis indeed a bitter cup, but, *Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me to drink?* 'tis in love to my soul; God *corrects* with the same love he *crowns* me; God is now training me up for heaven, he carves me, to make me a *polished shaft*. These sufferings bring forth patience, humility, even *the peaceable fruits of righteousness*; Heb. 12. 11. And if God can bring such sweet fruit out of a sowre stock, let him graft me where he please. Thus faith brings the heart to holy Contentment.

2. Faith sucks the honey of Contentment out of the hive of the Promise. Christ is the *Vine*, the promises are the clusters of Grapes that grow upon this

this Vine; and Faith presseth the sweet wine of Contentment out of these spiritual clusters of the Promises. I will shew you but one cluster; *The Lord will give grace and glory*; Psal. 84. 11. here is enough for faith to live upon. The Promise is the flower out of which Faith distils the spirits, and quintessence of Divine Contentment. In a word, Faith carries up the soul, and makes it aspire after more noble and generous delights than earth affords, and to live in the world *above* the world. Would you lead contented lives? live up to the height of your Faith.

SECT. II.

2. Rule. *Labour for Assurance.*

Oh let us get the interest clear'd between God and our own souls. *Interest* is a word much in use, a pleasing word, Interest in great friends, interest-money; Oh if there be an *interest* worth looking after, 'tis an interest between God and the soul; Labour to say, *My God.* To be without money, and without friends, and without God too, *Eph.* 2. 12. is sad; but he whose faith doth flourish into assurance, that can say, *I know in whom I have believed*; 2 Tim. 1. 12. (as Saint *Paul*) that man hath enough to give his heart contentment. When a mans debts are paid, and he can go abroad without fear of arresting, what contentment is this! Oh, let your title be cleared; if God be ours, whatever we want in the creature, is infinitely made up in him. Do I want bread? I have Christ the bread of life. Am I under detriment? his blood is like the trees of the Sanctuary, not

not only for meat, but medicine; *Ezek* 47. 12. If any thing in the world be worth labouring for, it is to get sound evidences that God is ours. If this be once clear'd, what can come amiss? No matter what storms I meet with, so that I know where to put in for harbour. He that hath God to be his God, is so well contented with his condition, that he doth not care whether he hath any thing else. To rest in a condition where a Christian cannot say God is his God, is matter of *fear*; and if he can say so truly, and yet is not contented, is matter of *shame*. David *encouraged himself in the Lord his God*; 1 Sam. 30. it was sad with him, *Ziklag* burnt, his wives taken captive, he lost all, and like to have lost his Souldiers hearts too (for they *spake of stoning him*) yet he had the ground of Contentment within him, *viz. an interest in God*, and this was a supportment to his spirit. He that knows *God is his*, and all that is in God is *for his good*; if this doth not satisfie, I know nothing will.

SECT. III.

3. Rule. *Get an humble spirit.*

The humble man is the contented man; if his *estate* be low, his heart is lower than his estate; therefore be content. If his *esteem* in the world be low, he that is little in his own eys, will not be much troubled to be little in the eys of others. He hath a meaner opinion of himself than others can have of him. The humble man studies his own unworthiness; he looks upon himself as less *than the least of Gods mercies*; Gen. 32. 10. and then a *little* will content him. He cries out with

Paul,

Paul, that he is *the chief of sinners*, 1 Tim. 1. 25. therefore doth not murmur, but admire: He doth not say his comforts are small, but his sins are great. He thinks it a mercy he is out of hell, therefore is contented. He doth not go to carve out a more happy condition to himself; he knows the worst piece God cuts him, is better than he deserves. A proud man is never contented, he is one that hath an high opinion of himself; therefore under small blessings is disdainful, under small crosses impatient. The humble spirit is the contented spirit; if his cross be light, he reckons it in the inventory of his mercies; if it be heavy, yet takes it upon his knees, knowing that when his estate is worser, it is to make him better. Where you lay humility for the foundation, Contentment will be the superstructure.

SECT. IV.

4. Rule. *Keep a clear conscience.*

Contentment is the *Manna* that is laid up in the *Ark* of a good Conscience; Oh take heed of indulging any sin. 'Tis as natural for guilt to breed disquiet, as for putrid matter to breed vermine. Sin lies as *fomes* in the ship, it raiseth a tempest. If dust or motes be gotten in the eye, they make the eye water, and cause a soreness in it; if the eye be clear, then it is free from that soreness. If sin be gotten into the conscience, which is as the eye of the soul, then grief and disquiet breeds there; but keep the eye of conscience clear, and all is well. What *Solomon* saith of a good stomach, I may say of *a good conscience*: *To the hungry soul*

every

every bitter thing is sweet; Prov. 27. 7. so to a good conscience every bitter thing is sweet; it can pick contentment out of the *Cross*. Good conscience turns the waters of *Marah* into wine. Would you have a quiet heart? get a smiling conscience. I wonder not to hear *Paul* say, he was in every state content; When he could make that triumph, *I have lived in all good conscience to this day*, Acts 23. 1. When once a mans reckonings are clear, it must needs let in abundance of contentment into the heart. Good conscience can suck contentment out of the bittrest drugge; under slanders, *This is our rejoycing, the Testimony of our Conscience*, 2 Cor. 1. 12. in case of imprisonment, *Paul* had his prison-songs, and could play the sweet lesson of contentment, when his feet were in the stocks; *Act.* 16. 25. one calls it *bona conscientiæ Paradisus*, the Paradise of a good conscience; and if it be so, then in prison we may be in Paradise. When the times are troublesome, good conscience makes a calm; If conscience be clear, what though the days be cloudy? Is it not a contentment to have a friend always by, to speak a good word for us? such a friend is conscience. Good conscience as *Davids Harp*, drives away the evil spirit of discontent. When thoughts begin to arise, and the heart is disquieted; Conscience saith to a man, as the *King* did to *Nehemiah*, *Why is thy countenance sad?* Neh. 2. 2. So saith conscience, hast not thou the *seed of God* in thee? art not thou an *heir of the Promise?* Hast not thou a treasure that thou canst never be plundered of? Why is thy countenance sad? Oh keep conscience clear, and you shall never want contentment. For a man to keep the *pipes* of his body, the veins and arteries free from colds and obstructions, is the best way to

maintain health: So, to keep conscience clear, and to preserve it from the obstructions of guilt, is the best way to maintain contentment. First, conscience is pure and then peaceable.

SECT. V.

5. Rule. *Learn to deny your selves.*

Look well to your affections, bridle them in. Do two things,

1. Mortifie your desires.
2. Moderate your delights.

1. *Mortifie your desires.* We must not be of the Dragons temper, who (they say) is so thirsty, that no water will quench his thirst; *Mortifie therefore your inordinate affection*; Col. 3. 5. in the Greek it is, your *evil affection*: to shew that our desires when they are inordinate, are *evil*. Crucifie your desires, be as dead men; a dead man hath no appetite.

Quest. How should a Christian martyr his desires?

Answ. 1. Get a right judgment of the things here below: They are mean, beggarly things; *Wilt thou set thine eys upon that which is not?* Prov. 23. 5. The appetite must be guided by reason; the affections are the feet of the soul, therefore they must *follow* the judgment, not *lead* it.

2. Often seriously meditate of mortality; Death will soon crop those flowers which we delight in, and pull down the fabrick of those bodies which we so garnish and beautifie. Think

when you are locking up your money in your cheſt, who ſhall ſhortly lock you up in your coffin?

2. *Moderate your delights.* Set not your heart too much upon any creature; *Pſal.* 62. 10. What we over-love, we ſhall over-grieve. *Rachel* ſet her heart too much upon her children, and when ſhe had loſt them, ſhe loſt her ſelf too, ſuch a vein of grief was opened as could not be ſtenched, *ſhe refuſed to be comforted.* Here was diſcontent When we let any creature lie too near our heart, when God pulls away that comfort a piece of our heart is rent away with it. Too much fondneſs ends in frowardneſs. Thoſe that would be content in the want of mercy, muſt be moderate in the enjoyment. *Jonathan* dipt the rod in honey, he did not thruſt it in. Let us take heed of ingulphing our ſelves in pleaſure, better have a ſpare diet, than by having too much, to ſurfeit.

SECT. VI.

6. Rule. *Get much of Heaven into your heart.*

Spiritual things ſatisfie; the more of heaven is in us, the leſs earth will content. He that hath once taſted the love of God, *Pſal.* 63. 5. his thirſt is much quenched toward ſublunary things; the joys of Gods Spirit are heart-filling and heart-chearing joys; he that hath theſe, hath heaven begun in him, *Rom.* 14. 17. and ſhall we not be content to be in heaven? Oh get a ſublime heart, *Seek the things that are above*; Col. 3. 1. flie aloft

in your affections, thirst after the graces and comforts of the Spirit; the Eagle that flies above in the air, fears not the stinging of the serpent; the serpent creeps on his belly, and stings onely such creatures as go upon the earth.

Discontent is a serpent that stings only an earthly heart; an heavenly soul that with the Eagle flies aloft, finds abundantly enough in God to give contentment, and is not stung with the cares and disquiets of the world.

SECT. VII.

7. Rule. *Look not so much on the dark side of your condition, as on the light.*

God doth chequer his providences, white and black, as the pillar of cloud had its light side and dark; look on the light side of thy estate; who looks on the backside of a landskip? Suppose thou art cast in a Law-suit, there is the *dark side*; yet thou hast some land left, there is the *light side*. Thou hast sickness in thy body, there is the *dark side*; but grace in thy soul, there is the *light side*. Thou hast a child taken away, there is the *dark side*; thy husband lives, there is the *light side*. Gods providences in this life are various, represented by those speckled horses among the Myrtle trees, which were the *red* and *white*; Zach. 1.8. mercies and afflictions are interwoven, God doth speckle his work. Oh, saith one, I want such a comfort: but weigh all thy mercies in the balance, and that will make thee content. If a man did want a finger, would he be so discontented for the loss of that, as not to be thankful for all the other parts

and

and joynts of his body? Look on the *light side* of your condition, and then all your discontents will easily disband; do not pore upon your losses, but ponder upon your mercies. What? wouldst thou have no cross at all? Why should one man think to have all good things, when himself is good but in part? Would'st thou have no evil about thee, who hast so much evil in thee? thou art not fully sanctified in this life, how then thinkest thou to be fully satisfied? never look for perfection of contentment till there be perfection of grace.

SECT. VIII.

8. Rule. *Consider in what a posture we stand here in the world.*

1. We are in a *military* condition, we are *souldiers*; 2 Tim. 2. 3. now a souldier is content with any thing; what though he hath not his stately house, his rich furniture, his soft bed, his full table? yet doth not complain; he can lie in straw as well as down; he minds not his lodging, but his thoughts run upon dividing the spoil, and the garland of honour that shall be set upon his head; and for hope of this is content to run any hazard, endure any hardship. Were it not absurd to hear him complain that he wants such provision, and is fain to lie out in the fields? a Christian is a *military person*, he fights the Lords battels, he's Christs Enfign bearer. Now what though he endures hard fare, and the bullets flie about? he fights for a crown, and therefore must be content.

2. We are in a *peregrine condition*; Pilgrims and travellers. A man that is in a ſtrange countrey is contented with any diet or uſage, he is glad of any thing, though he hath not that reſpect or attendance as he looks for at home; nor is capable of the priviledges and immunities of that place; he is content; he knows when he comes into his own countrey he hath lands to inherit, and there he ſhall have honour and reſpect: So it is with a child of God, he is in a pilgrimage-condition, *I am a ſtranger with thee, and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were*; Pſal. 39. 12. Therefore let a Chriſtian be content: he is *in* the world, but not *of* the world; he is born of God, and is a Citizen of the New *Jeruſalem*; Heb. 12. 10. therefore, though *he hunger and thirſt, and have no certain dwelling place*, 1 Cor. 4. 11. yet he muſt be content; it will be better when he comes into his own countrey.

3. We are in a *mendicant condition*; we are beggers, we beg at heaven gate, *Give us this day our daily bread*; we live upon Gods alms, therefore muſt be content with any thing; a begger muſt not pick and chuſe, he is contented with the refuſe. Oh, why doſt thou murmur that art a begger, and art fed out of the alms baſket of Gods providence?

SECT.

SECT. IX.

9. Rule. *Let not your hopes depend extrinsice upon these outward things.*

Lean not upon sandy pillars; we oft build our comfort upon such a friend or estate, and when that prop is removed, all our joy is gone, and our hearts begin either to *fail* or *fret*. A lame man leans on his crutches, and if they *break* he is undone: let not thy contentment go upon crutches which may soon fail; the ground of contentment must be within thy self. The word *Autarkeia*, which is used for contentment, signifies self-sufficiency; a Christian hath that from within that is able to support him; that strength of faith and *good hope through grace*, as bears up his heart in the deficiency of outward comforts. The Philosophers of old, when their estates were gone, yet could take contentment in the goods of the mind, their learning and vertue; and shall not a believer much more in the grace of the Spirit, that rich enamel and embroidery of the soul? Say with thy self, if friends leave me, if riches take wings; yet I have that within comforts me, *viz.* an heavenly treasure, *Omnium mea mecum porto*; when the blossoms of my estate are blown off, still there is the sap of contentment in the root of my heart, I have still an interest in God, and that interest cannot be broken off. Oh never place your felicity in these dull and beggerly things here below.

SECT.

SECT. X.

10. Rule. *Let us often compare our condition.*

Quest. *How should I compare?*

Answ. Make this five-fold comparison,

1. Let us compare our condition and our desert together; if we have not what we desire, we have more than we deserve. For our *mercies* we have deserved *less*; for our afflictions, we have deserved *more*.

First, in regard of our *mercies*, we have deserved less. What can we deserve? *Can man be profitable to the Almighty?* we live upon free grace. *Alexander* gave a great gift to one of his subjects; the man being much taken with it, *This* (saith he) *is more than I am worthy of*; *I do not give thee this*, saith the King, *because thou art worthy of it, but I give a gift like* Alexander. Whatever we have is not *merit*, but *bounty*; the least bit of bread is more than God ows us; we can bring faggots to our own burning, but not one flower to the garland of our salvation; he that hath the least mercy, will die in Gods debt.

Secondly, in regard of our *afflictions*, we have deserved more. *Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve*; Ezra 9. 13. Is our condition sad? we have deserved it should be worse; hath God taken away our estate from us? he might have taken away Christ from us: hath he thrown us into prison? he might have thrown us into hell; he might as well damn us, as whip us; this should make us contented.

2. Let

2. Let us compare our condition with others; and this will make us content; we look at them who are above us, let us look at them who are below us; we see one in his silks, another in his sackcloth; one hath the waters of a full cup wrung out to him, another is mingling his drink with tears; how many pale faces do we behold, whom not sickness, but want hath brought into a consumption! think of this, and be content. 'Tis worse with them, who perhaps deserve better than we, and are higher in Gods favour. Am I in prison? was not *Daniel* in a worse place, *viz.* the Lions den? Do I live in a mean Cottage? look on them who are banished from their houses. We read of the Primitive Saints, *that they wandered up and down in sheeps skins and goats skins, of whom the world was not worthy*; Heb. 11. 37. Hast thou a gentle fit of an Ague? look on them who are tormented with the Stone and Gout, *&c.* Others of Gods children have had greater afflictions, and have born them better than we. *Daniel* fed upon pulse and drank water, yet was fairer than they who ate of the Kings portion; *Dan.* 1. 15. some Christians who have been in a lower condition, that have fed upon pulse and water, have looked better; *viz.* been more patient and contented than we who enjoy abundance. Do others rejoyce in affliction, and do we repine? Can they take up their Cross and walk chearfully under it, and do we under a lighter cross murmur?

3. Let us compare our condition with Christs upon Earth, what a poor, mean condition was he pleased to be in for us? he was contented with any thing. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for*

your

your ſakes he became poor; 2 Cor. 8. 9. He could have brought down an houſe from heaven with him, or challenged the high places of the earth; but he was contented to be in the *wine-preſs*, that we might be in the *wine-cellar*; and to live poor, that we might die rich; the manger was his cradle, the cobwebs his canopy; he, who is now preparing manſions for us in heaven, had none for himſelf on earth, *he had no where to lay his head.* Chriſt came *in forma pauperis*; who *being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a ſervant*; Phil. 2. 7. We read not of any ſums of money he had; when he wanted money, he was fain to work a miracle for it; Mat. 17. 27. Jeſus Chriſt was in a low condition, he was never high; but when he was lifted up upon the Croſs, and that was his humility; he was content to live poor, and die curſed. Oh compare your condition with Chriſts.

4. Let us compare our condition with what it was once, and this will make us content.

Firſt, Let us compare our *ſpiritual eſtate* with what it was once. What were we when we lay in our blood? we were heirs apparent to hell, having no right to pluck one leaf from the tree of the Promiſe, it was a *Chriſtleſs* and *hopeleſs* condition, *Epheſ.* 2. 12. but now God hath cut off the entail of hell and damnation; he hath taken you out of the wild Olive of Nature, and ingrafted you into Chriſt, making you living branches of that living Vine; he hath not only cauſed the light to ſhine *upon* you, but *into* you, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. and hath intereſſed you in all the Priviledges of Son-ſhip; is not here that may make the Soul content?

So-

Secondly, Let us compare our *temporal estate* with what it was once; alas, we had nothing when we stepp'd out of the womb; *For we brought nothing with us into the world*; 2 Tim. 6. 7 if we have not that which we desire, we have more then we did bring with us; we brought nothing with us (*but sin*;) other creatures bring something with them into the world; the Lamb brings wooll, the silk-worm silk, *&c.* but we brought nothing with us. What if our condition at present be low? it is better then it was once, therefore having food and raiment let us be content; whatever we have, Gods providence fetcht it into us; and if we lose all, yet we have as much as we brought with us. This was that made *Job* content, *Naked came I out of my mothers womb*; Job. 1. 21. as if he had said, though God hath taken away all from me, yet why should I murmur? I am as rich now as I was when I came into the world; I have as much left as I brought with me; naked came I hither. Therefore blessed be the Name of the Lord.

5. Let us compare our condition, with what it shall be shortly. There is a time shortly coming, when if we had all the riches of *India*, they would do us no good; we must die, and can carry nothing with us; so saith the Apostle, *It is certain, we can carry nothing out of the world*; 1 Tim. 6. 7. therefore it follows, *having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*, Ver. 8. Open the rich mans grave, and see what is there; you may find the *Misers* bones, but not his riches: were we to live for ever here, or could we carry our riches into another world, then indeed we might be discontented when we look upon our empty bags; but it is not so: God may presently seal a warrant for Death to apprehend us; and when we die we cannot

cannot carry our estate with us. Honour and riches descend not into the grave, why then are we troubled at our outward condition? Why do we disguise our selves with discontent? Oh lay up a stock of grace, be rich in faith and good works, these *riches will follow us*; Rev. 14. 13. no other coin but grace will pass currant in heaven, silver and gold will not go there; labour to *be rich towards God*; Luke 12. 21. and as for other things, be not solicitous, *we shall carry nothing with us.*

SECT. XI.

11. Rule. *Go not to bring your condition to your mind, but bring your mind to your condition.*

The way for a Christian to be contented, is not by raising his estate higher, but by bringing his spirit lower; not by making his barns wider, but his heart narrower; one man a whole Lordship or Mannor will not content; another is satisfied with a few acres of land; what is the difference? the one studies to satisfie curiosity, the other necessity; the one thinks what he may *have*, the other what he may *spare.*

SECT. XII.

12. Rule. *Study the vanity of the creature.*

It matters not whether we have more or less of these things, they have vanity written upon the frontispiece

spice of them; the world is like a *shadow that declines*; it is delightful but deceitful; it promiseth more than we find, and it fails us when we have most need of it. All the world rings changes, and is constant only in its disappointments: what then if we have less of that which is at best but voluble and fluid? The world is as full of *mutation as motion*; and what if God cuts us short in sublunaries? The more a man hath to do with the world, the more he hath to do with vanity. The world may be compared to ice, which is smooth, but slippery; or to the Egyptian Temples, without very beautiful and sumptuous, but within nothing to be seen but the image of an Ape; every creature saith concerning satisfaction, *It is not in me*. The world is not a filling, but a flying comfort. 'Tis like a game at Tennis; Providence handles her golden balls, first to one, then to another. Why are we discontented at the loss of these things, but because we expect that from them which is not, and repose that in them, which we ought not? *Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd*, Jonah 4. 6. what a vanity was it? is it much to see a withering Gourd smitten? or to see the Moon dressing it self in a new shape and figure?

SECT. XIII.

13. Rule. *Get Phancy regulated.*

It is the Phancy which raiseth the price of things above their real worth; what is the reason one Tulip is worth five pounds, another perhaps not worth one shilling? Phancy raiseth the price, the difference is rather imaginary than real: so why it should be better to have thousands than hundreds,

is, because men phancy it so; if we could phancy a lower condition better, as having less care in it and less account, it would be far more eligible; the water that springs out of the rock, drinks as sweet, as if it came out of a golden chalice; things are as we phancy them. Even since the fall, the phancy is distempered. *God saw that the imagination of the thoughts of his heart were evil*, Gen 6. 5. Phancy looks through wrong spectacles, pray that God will sanctifie your phancy; a lower condition would content, if the mind and phancy were set right. *Diogenes* preferred his Cynical life before *Alexander's* royalty; he phancied his little cloyster best. *Fabricius* a poor man, yet despised the gold of King *Pyrrhus*.

Contentus honesto
Fabricius parvo spernebat munera regum,
Sudabatque gravi Consul Serranus arato.
Claud. l. 1.

Could we cure a distempered phancy, we might soon conquer a discontented heart.

SECT. XIV.

14. Rule. *Consider how little will suffice Nature.*

The body is but of small continent, and is easily secroited. Christ hath taught us to pray *for our daily bread*, *Parva seges satis est*, Nature is content with a little; *Not to thirst, not to starve, not to freeze enough*; saith *Gregory Nazianzen*. Meat and drink is a Christians riches, saith St. *Hieromie*; and the apostle saith, *Having food and raiment, let us*

O prodigia rerum,
Luxuries, nunquam parvo contenta paratu,
Quæsitorum pelago, terraque ciborum
Ambitiosa Fames, & lautæ gloria mensæ!
Discite quam parvo liceat producere vitam,
Et quantum natura petat ——

Lucan. *l.* 4. Pharſal.

The ſtomack is ſooner fill'd than the eye; How quickly would a man be content, if he would ſtudy rather to ſatisfie his *hunger* then his *humour*?

SECT. XV.

15. Rule. *Believe the preſent condition is beſt for us.*

Fleſh and blood is not a competent judge. Surfeited ſtomacks are not for banquetting ſtuff; but a man that regards his health, is rather for ſolid food. Vain men fancy ſuch a condition beſt, and would flouriſh in their bravery; whereas a wiſe Chriſtian hath his will melted into Gods will, and thinks it beſt to be at his finding. God is wiſe, he knows whether we need food or phyſick; and if we could acquieſce in providence, the quarrel would ſoon be at an end. O, what a ſtrange creature would man be, if he were what he could with himſelf? Be content to be at Gods allowance, God knows which is the fitteſt paſture to put his ſheep in; Sometimes a more barren ground doth well, whereas rank paſture may rot. Do I meet with ſuch a croſs? God ſhews me what the world is; he hath no better way to wean me, than by putting me to a ſtep-mother. Doth God ſtint me in my allowance? he is now dieting me. Do I meet with loſſes?

it is that God may keep me from being lost. Every cross wind shall at last blow me to the right port. Did we believe that condition best which God doth parcel out to us, we should chearfully submit and say, *The lines are fallen in pleasant places.*

SECT. XVI.

16. Rule. *Do not too much indulge the flesh.*

We have taken an oath in Baptisme to *forsake the flesh.* The flesh is a worse enemy then the devil; it is *a bosome traitor*: an enemy within is worst. If there were no devil to tempt, the flesh would be another Eve to tempt to the *forbidden fruit.* Oh take heed of giving way to it; whence is all our discontent, but from the fleshly part? The flesh puts us upon the immoderate pursuit of the world; it consults for ease and plenty, and if it be not satisfied, then discontents begin to arise. Oh, let it not have the reins, martyr the flesh; in spiritual things the flesh is a *sluggard*, in secular things an *horseleech*, crying, *Give, give.* The flesh is an enemy to suffering, it will sooner make a man a *Courtier* than a *Martyr.* Oh keep it under, put its neck under Christs yoke, stretch and nail it to his Cross; never let a Christian look for *contentment* in his spirit, till there be *confinement* in his flesh.

SECT. XVII.

17. Rule. *Meditate much on the glory which shall be revealed.*

There are great things laid up in heaven: Though it be sad for the present, yet let us be con-

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tent in that it will shortly be better; it is but a while, and we shall be with Christ, bathing our souls in the fountain of his love; we shall never complain of wants or injuries any more; our cross may be heavy, but one sight of Christ will make us forget all our former sorrows. There are two things should give contentment;

1. That God will make us able to bear our troubles, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. God (saith *Chrysostom*) doth like a Lutenist, who will not let the strings of his Lute be too slack, lest it spoil the musick; nor will he suffer them to be too hard stretched, or screwed up, lest they break: So doth God deal with us, he will not let us have too much prosperity, lest this spoil the musick of prayer and repentance; nor yet too much adversity, lest the spirit *fail before him*, and the souls *which he hath made*, Isa. 57. 16.

2. When we have suffered *a while*, 1 Pet. 5. 10. we shall be perfected in glory; the Cross shall be our ladder by which we shall climb up to heaven. Be then content, and the scene will alter. God will ere long turn our water into wine; the hope of this is enough to drive away all distempers from *the heart*. Blessed be God, it will be better; *We have no continuing city here*, Heb. 13. therefore our afflictions cannot continue. A wise man looks still to the end: *The end of the just man is peace*, Psal. 37. 37. Methinks the smoothness of the end should make amends for the ruggedness of the way. O eternity! eternity! think often of the *King now prepared*. *David* was advanced from the field to the Throne. First he held his *Shepherds staffe*, and shortly after, the *Royal Scepter*. Gods people may be put to hard services here; but God hath chosen them to be *Kings*, to sit upon the throne with the

Lord Jesus. This being weighed in the balance of Faith, would be an excellent means to bring the heart to contentment.

SECT. XVII.

18. Rule, *Be much in Prayer.*

The last Rule for Contentment is, *Be much in Prayer.* Beg of God that he will work out hearts to this blessed frame; *Is any man afflicted? let him pray* Jam. 5. 13. So, is any man discontented? let him pray, Prayer gives vent. The opening of a vein, lets out the bad blood: When the heart is filled with sorrow and disquiet, prayer lets out the bad blood. The key of prayer oiled with tears, unlocks the heart of all its discontents. Prayer is an holy spell or charm to drive away trouble; Prayer is the unbosoming of the soul, the unloading of all our cares in Gods breast, and this ushers in sweet contentment. When there is any burden upon our spirits, by opening our mind to a friend, we find our hearts finely eased and quieted. It is not our *strong resolutions*, but our *strong requests* to God, which must give the heart ease in trouble; by Prayer the strength of Christ is brought into the soul; and what is that, a man is able to go through any condition. *Paul* could be in every state content: but that you may not think think he was able to do this of himself, he tells you, that though he could want and abound, and *do all things*, ye it was *through Christ strengthening him*, Phil. 13. 'Tis the child that writes, but it is the Scrivener guides his hand. St *Paul* arrived at the hardest duty in Religion, *viz.* Con-

tentment,

tentment, but the Spirit was his *Pilot*, and Christ his *strength*, and this strength was ushered in by holy prayer. Prayer is a powerful Orator. Prayer is an *exorcist* with God, and an *exorcist* against sin. The best way is to pray down discontent. What *Luther* saith of *concupiscence*, I may say of *Discontent*; prayer is a sacred Leech, to suck out the venome, and swelling of this passion. Prayer composeth the heart, and brings it into tune. Hath God deprived you of many comforts? bless God that he left you the Spirit of Prayer.

Use 6. The last use is of comfort, or an encouraging word to the contented Christian. If there be an heaven upon earth, thou hast it. O Christian, thou may'st insult over thy troubles, and with the *Leviathan* laugh at the shaking of a spear, Job 41. 29. What shall I say? thou art a crown to thy profession, thou dost hold it out to all the world, that there's vertue enough in Religion to give the soul contentment. Thou the weft height of grace. When grace is *crowning*, it is not so much for us to be content; but when grace is *conflicting*, and meets with crosses, tentations, agonies, now to be content, this is a glorious thing indeed.

To a contented Christian, I shall say two things for a farewel.

First, God is exceedingly taken with such a frame of heart. God saith of a contented Christian, as *David* once said of *Goliahs* sword, *There is none like that, give it me*, 1 Sam. 21. 9. If you would please God, and be *men of his heart*, be contented. It it said that *Rebecca* made *Isaac* savoury meat, such as her husband loved; would ye give God *such a dish as he loves?* bring him this of Contentment. The Musician hath many lessons to play, but he hath one above all the rest; There

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are many lessons of holy Musick that delight God, the lesson of repentance, humility, &c. But this lesson of Contentment is the sweetest lesson that a Believer can play. God hates a froward spirit.

Secondly, The contented Christian shall be no loser. What lost *Job* by his patience? God gave him three times as much as he had before. What lost *Abram* by his contentment? he was content to leave his Countrey at Gods call; the Lord makes a Covenant with him, that he would be *his God*, Gen. 17. He changeth his name; no more *Abram*, but *Abraham* the Father of many Nations. God makes his seed as the Stars of heaven; nay honours him with this Title, *The Father of the Faithful*, Gen. 18. 17. The Lord makes known his secrets to him, *Shall I hide from* Abraham *the thing that I will do?* God settles a rich inheritance upon him, that land which was a type of heaven, and afterwards translated him into the blessed Paradise. God will be sure to reward the contented Christian. As our Saviour said in another case to *Nathanael*, *Because I said I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these*, John 1. 50. So, I say, Art thou contented (O Christian) with a little? thou shalt see greater things than these; God will distill the sweet influences of his love into thy soul; He will raise thee up friends; he will bless the oil in the cruse; and when that is done, he will crown thee with an Eternal Enjoyment of Himself; he will give thee Heaven, where thou shalt have as much Contentment as thy Soul can possibly thirst after.

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